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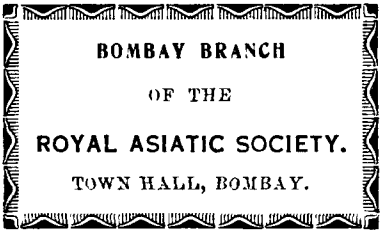

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LEGENDS OF ICELAND.

LONDON. PRINTED BY W. CLOWES AND SONS, STAMFORD STREET AND CHARING CROSS.

ICELANDIC LEGENDS.

COLLECTED BY

JÓN ARNASON.

E3248
JC

TRANSLATED BY

GEORGE E. J. POWELL

AND

EIRÍKUR MAGNÚSSON.

"The mighty ones of Eld are all departed:
Warriors from ruined hall, and elves from rock and stream:
And we alone remain, the little hearted,
To tell the tales of those who Did; while we but sit and dream."
(*From the* ICELANDIC *of* MATTHIAS JOCHUMSEN.)

WITH TWENTY-EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS.

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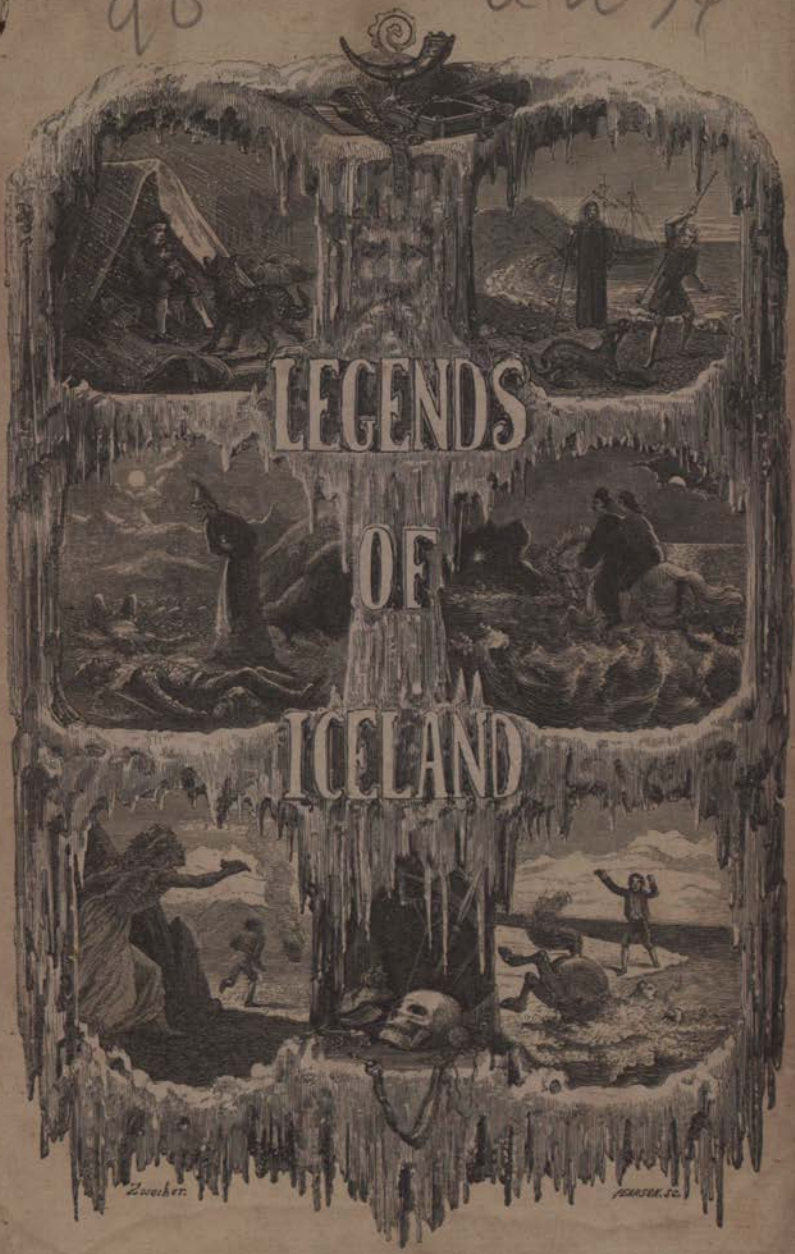
LEGENDS
OF
ICELAND

PREFACE.

THOSE who are thoroughly acquainted with the literature of Iceland are agreed that, so far as the historical part of it is concerned, it holds a distinguished place among the literatures of the world, next indeed to the classics of ancient Greece and Rome. And though its historians, the authors of its noble sagas, have been men of high learning and cultivated minds, its peasants, uncultivated and unlearned, have been those who have handed down to us the traditional lore of the country, the poetical and imaginative tales of elves, trolls, ghosts, goblins, and monsters; some contenting themselves with telling them often by the winter fire; others adding stories from their own mental testimonies. And thus, in the course of many years, the mass of such stories has accumulated, until at length, becoming perhaps too unwieldy for oral tradition, it has been committed to paper by the peasants and others, who were its guardians and possessors, at the earnest and constant request of Mr. Jón Arnason,

who, with a diligence and perseverance which have rightly earned for him the name of "The Grimm of Iceland," has gathered into one great mass the mighty body of Icelandic folk-lore.

From this immense collection Mr. Arnason published, in 1862, a volume called "Íslenzkar Þjóðsögur og Æfintýri" (Icelandic National Stories and Tales), at Leipzig, of which the first part has appeared this year. It is from these volumes that the present selection has been made. As we have intended this volume more for amusement than instruction, we have wilfully omitted the able introduction written by Mr. Guðbrandr Vigfússon (a learned Icelander, at Copenhagen), which treats of the Icelandic superstition in all its branches. For the same reason we have also left out many topographical names and allusions, which, to be of any use to the general public, would require an elaborately finished map and long explanatory notes.

And here, perhaps, a few extracts from Mr. Vigfússon's preface might not be out of place.

"Iceland, from the times of its earliest settlement, has abounded with tales of elves, goblins, trolls, and supernatural beings of every description, as will be at once acknowledged by anyone who is conversant with the sagas. These tales are closely coherent with, and have risen and grown in the company of, the historical sagas, as, in those long gone-by days, history and tradition lived in the greatest union. Both, as twin sisters, are begotten

in the same bosom, and both can therefore be called national; and to this name the superstitional tales have perhaps the highest claims, since they are the offspring of fancy and popular poetry, never dying out so long as the flame of imagination is not extinct in the minds of the people, and assuming a new form with every age, according to the way in which the spirit of that age regards the world of wonders. When times are dark, and superstition gloomy, we find tales of goblins and witchcraft to be most prevalent. But on the dawning of brighter days, the quaint and elegant stories of elves become the objects of popular poetry."

We still quote from Mr. Vigfússon.

"At first it was intended to apply to this collection of stories some name that savoured strongly of the past, but it soon appeared that such a denomination would not be applicable to all the stories. The author, therefore, changed his intention, and has called the work 'Icelandic National Stories and Tales.' Because the olden time is the mother of the present, people are too often inclined to make it the standard of everything good, and to institute invidious comparisons, declaring that all that we have and know has been handed down from those bygone days, from man to man and from mouth to mouth; we, of the modern days, doing nothing but picking up and piecing together the fragments we find. And applying this theory to literature, they disparage all folk-lore which

is not avowedly ancient. But they do not consider that as long as nation is nation, and life is life, old things either die out and become extinct, or else change their colours; are either replaced by, or closely mingled with, the new. That nation, therefore, which does nothing but remember, must be looked upon as dead, as petrified, as no longer to be numbered among the living and acting. These stories will show clearly that the Icelanders are not so utterly deprived of mental life as to be unable to replace old with new, and to add to their literary treasure-heap. Many of them are of quite modern origin, and will not suffer from a comparison with those of older date."

Mr. Jón Arnason, the talented collector of these tales (the two volumes hitherto published being but a tithe of the entire mass which lies in his hand), is the librarian of the only public library in Iceland, that of Reykjavík Cathedral, and secretary to the bishop. We seize with high pleasure this opportunity of paying our tribute of praise to his energy and zeal as a collector, for he has spent thirty years, and large sums of money, in searching for, and obtaining from all quarters of the island these "records of the lower classes;" to his conscientiousness as an editor, for he has published the stories intact as he received them; to his great talents as a scholar; and last, though by no means least, to his uprightness and modesty as a gentleman, and his kindness as a friend.

From Mr. Arnason's Selection we have selected still further, reducing the work to about a third of its original dimensions. Many of the stories given in the Icelandic edition we have omitted on account of their want of interest and climax. Others, because they were but repetitions, with slight and unimportant variations, of stories taken. Others, of high beauty and originality, we have most reluctantly left out, from the fact of their being founded on incidents which would shock the sensibility of many readers; and it is our earnest hope, that among our reading public will be numbered many children. Of these last-named stories we may particularly mention "Skapti Sœmundsson the Surgeon," and "The Sorb-trees;" the former remarkable for its singular mixture of fact and fiction, the latter for its extreme beauty and poetical fancy.

An apologetic Preface is never worth much; if a book is bad, it does not improve it, and if a book is good it is superfluous: it is either a sop for Cerberus, or a line cast out for compliments. But, in conclusion, we will say a few words, not apologetically, concerning our manner of treating the stories herein contained. We have not translated closely; we have amplified, we have expunged, we have inverted. Where stories were told barely and nakedly, we have coloured and clothed them; where irrelevancies occurred, we have either got rid of them or harmonized them with the text; where incidents or descriptions have

been given out of their proper places, we have changed their position. In Icelandic, tautology, if well managed, is looked upon as a merit; in English, on the contrary, it is regarded as a sign of clumsiness: we have therefore expunged all repetitions. We have confined ourselves throughout to straightforward language, adopting sometimes words and forms of speech which may, perhaps, be looked upon as stiff and obsolete, but which, in such a work as the present, replace well the rounded periods and ingenious Latinisms of the most modern English. And as our great example in this, we have Dr. Dasent, who alone of men has hitherto made the noblest Icelandic language breathe freely in an English dress, and who, by the purity of his writings, and the consummate skill with which he has introduced true and expressive old English words and phrases, has gained the admiration of all the philological world.

In the case of one story, however, that of "Grímur who killed Skeljungur," we have adhered pretty closely to the text, as we wished our readers to see how an Icelandic peasant (who is still living) could tell a classical tale.

Subsequent to the conclusion of Part IV., there fell into our hands a little work, entitled "Icelandic Stories and Fairy Tales, translated into English by the Rev. Olaf Pálsson, Dean and Rector of Reykjavík Cathedral, revised and edited by David Mackinlay and Andrew James Symington," which contained several stories which we had

already translated from the original text; namely, that about Una, that about Hildur, and "The Father of Eighteen Elves," called by Mr. Pálsson "The Changeling." Besides these, there were the stories of Sœmundur the Learned, upon which we were engaged, and several others we do not include in our work. We refrained from *reading* the book until our own was concluded. We therefore absolve ourselves from any charge of plagiarism.

We are indebted for the illustrations to Messrs. Worms, Zwecker, Powell, &c.

GEORGE E. J. POWELL.
EIRÍKUR MAGNÚSSON.

LONDON,
January, 1864.

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STORIES OF ELVES.

"And purchased another in a dark and dismal valley, over which the sun seldom shone in summer and never in winter, and in the darkest and gloomiest recess intended to take up her abode."—p. 116.

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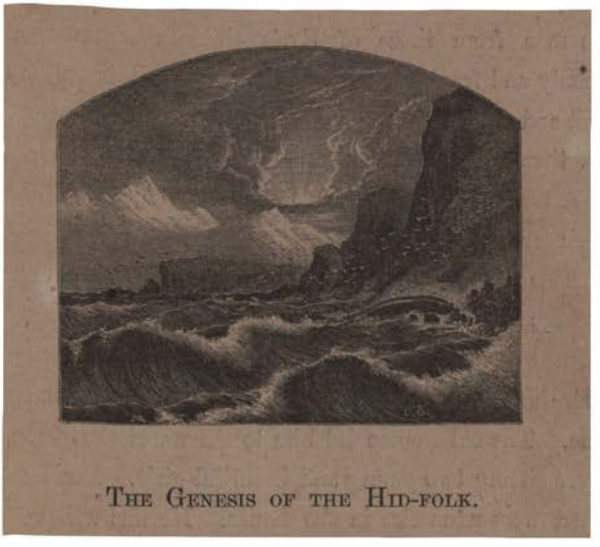
LEGENDS OF ICELAND.



THE GENESIS OF THE HID-FOLK.

ONCE upon a time, God Almighty came to visit Adam and Eve. They received him with joy, and showed him everything they had in the house. They also brought their children to him, to show him, and these He found promising and full of hope. Then He asked Eve whether she had no other children than these whom she now showed him. She said "None."

But it so happened that she had not finished washing

them all, and, being ashamed to let God see them dirty, had hidden the unwashed ones. This God knew well, and said therefore to her, "What man hides from God, God will hide from man." These unwashed children became forthwith invisible, and took up their abode in mounds, and hills, and rocks. From these are the elves descended, but we men from those of Eve's children whom she had openly and frankly shown to God. And it is only by the will and desire of the elves themselves that men can ever see them.

A traveller once lost his way, and knew not whither to turn or what to do. At last, after wandering about for some time, he came to a hut, which he had never seen before; and on his knocking at the door, an old woman opened it, and invited him to come in, which he gladly did. Inside, the house seemed to be a clean and good one. The old woman led him to the warmest room, where were sitting two young and beautiful girls. Besides these there were none else in the house. He was well received and kindly treated, and having eaten a good supper was shown to bed.

He asked whether one of the girls might stay with him, as his companion for the night, and his request was granted.

And now wishing to kiss her, the traveller turned towards her, and placed his hand upon her; but his hand sank through her, as if she had been of mist, and though

he could well see her lying beside him, he could grasp nothing but the air. So he asked what this all meant, and she said, "Be not astonished, for I am a spirit. When the devil, in times gone by, made war in heaven, he, with all his armies, was driven into outer darkness. Those who turned their eyes to look after him as he fell, were also driven out of heaven; but those who were neither for nor against him, were sent to the earth and commanded to dwell there in the rocks and mountains. These are called Elves and Hid-folk. They can live in company with none but their own race. They do either good or evil, which they will, but what they do they do thoroughly. They have no bodies as you other mortals, but can take a human form and be seen of men when they wish. I am one of these fallen spirits, and so you can never hope to embrace me."

To this fate the traveller yielded himself, and has handed down to us this story.

The Fisherman of Götur.

It is told, that long ago, a peasant living at Götur in Mýrdalur, went out fishing round the island of Dyrhólar. In returning from the sea, he had to cross a morass. It happened once, that, on his way home, after nightfall, he came to a place where a man had lost his horse in the bog, and was unable to recover it without help. The fisherman,

to whom this man was a stranger, aided him in freeing his horse from the peat.

When the animal stood again safe and sound upon the dry earth, the stranger said to the fisherman, "I am your neighbour, for I live in Hvammsgil, and am, as you, returning from the sea. But I am so poor, that I cannot pay you for this service, as you ought to be paid. I will promise you, however, this much—that you shall never go to sea without catching fish, nor ever, if you will take my advice, return with empty hands. But you must never put to sea without having first seen me pass your house as if going towards the shore. Obey me in this matter and I promise you that you shall launch, at no time, your boat in vain."

The fisherman thanked him for this advice, and sure enough it was, that, for three years afterwards, never putting to sea till he had first seen his neighbour pass his door, he always launched his boat safely, and always came home full-handed.

But at the end of the three years, it fell out that one day, in the early morning, the fisherman looking out from his house, saw the wind and weather favourable and all other fishers hurrying down to the sea, to make the best of so good a time. But though he waited hour after hour, in the hope of seeing his neighbour pass, the man of Hvammsgil never came. At last losing his patience, he started out without having seen him go by. When he

came down to the shore, he found that all the boats were launched and far away.

Before night the wind rose and became a storm, and every boat that had that day put to sea was wrecked, and every fisher drowned, the peasant of Götur alone escaping, for he had been unable to go out fishing. The next night he had a strange dream, in which his neighbour from Hvammsgil came to him and said, "Although you did not yesterday follow my advice, I yet so far felt kindly towards you, that I hindered you from going out to sea, and saved you thus from drowning; but look no more forth to see me pass, for we have met for the last time." And never again did the peasant see his neighbour pass his door.

The Grateful Elfwoman.

A peasant's wife once dreamed that a woman came to her bedside, whom she knew to be a Huldukona, and who begged her to give her milk for her child, two quarts a day, for the space of a month, placing it always in a part of the house which she pointed out. The goodwife promised to do so, and remembered her promise when she awoke. So she put a milkbowl every morning in the place which the other had chosen, and left it there, always on her return finding it empty. This went on for a month; and at the end of the month she dreamed that the same woman came

to her, thanked her for her kindness, and begged her to accept the belt which she should find in the bed when she awoke, and then vanished. In the morning the goodwife found beneath her pillow, a silver belt, beautifully and rarely wrought, the promised gift of the grateful elf-woman.

Thórdur of Thrastastadir.

A certain man named Thórdur lived at Thrastastadir, in Skagafiördur.

One day, in the winter, he started from home, intending to go to the trading-town of Hofsós, but the snow had drifted so deeply that the way was thought unsafe. Not caring for this, he carried his merchandise in a bag and walked off across a bog, which he knew to be his shortest path to Hofsós. When he had gone a little way, he quite lost the track, but still walked straight on till nightfall, when he saw before him some warehouses, so lofty and so beautiful that they filled him with surprise. Going up to them he discovered a light in one of the windows, and at the same time heard some delightful music. So he looked in at the window and saw a number of people dancing. He then went to the door and knocked, and immediately it was opened by a well-dressed man, who asked him what he would? Thórdur told him how he had lost his way, and begged, if it were possible, for a night's shelter.

"Come in and be welcome," said the man, "you shall have shelter here. Bring in your bag too, and to-morrow I will trade with you, and I promise you that you shall not find the bargains of Hofsós better than mine."

Thórdur could scarcely believe his ears, but thought he must be dreaming. So the man let him into the chief room, spite of Thórdur's plain and muddy dress. There were many assembled there; the lady of the house, her children, and her servants, all gaily and brightly drest, making merry.

The man who had opened the door to Thórdur, and who was no other than the master of the house, said to the lady, "Wife, here is a man who has lost his way and who needs both rest and food: treat him well."

"I grieve to hear of his distress," replied she, and rising, brought in a good and plentiful supper, which she set before Thórdur, while the master of the house fetched wine and glasses, and begged Thórdur to drink with him. Thórdur did so, and thought he had never tasted such wine in all his life, nor ever met such goodly company, though he could not, for all that, help wondering at the strangeness of the adventure. Glass after glass of wine he drank, and by-and-by, becoming tipsy, went to bed and fell into a deep sleep.

Next morning, at breakfast, he was offered wine even better than that of the night before, and having drunk it, was conducted by the master to the trading-room, which

was well filled with every kind of merchandise. Then and there Thórdur showed the man his wares, and received from him in exchange more than half again what he would have got for them at Hofsós. With the money he bought corn and linen, and many other small things, at a much lower price than he was wont to pay elsewhere for the like, and filled with them his sack.

When the trading was finished the master offered him as a gift, a cloak for his wife and cakes for his children, saying to him, "These and many other good turns shall you have at my hands, as tokens of my gratitude to you for having saved my son from death." Thórdur wondered what the man could mean, but the other said, "Once, you were standing under the rock called Thórdarhöfdi, in company with other young men, waiting for a good wind to take your boat to Drángey. Your companions amused themselves by throwing stones against the rock, under which, as the sun was very hot, my son had laid himself down to sleep; for he was tired, having been up all the night. 'You bade them cease their sport, for it was a foolish one, you said, and a useless. They laughed at you for this notion of yours, and called you strange and fanciful for your pains. But had you not prevented them from throwing stones, they would have killed my son."

After this Thórdur took leave of all in the house, for the sky was now clear and the path good, and started on his homeward way, the master walking some steps with him,

to wish him "God-speed." Thórdur marched on steadily for a while; but chancing to look back for the house wherein he had passed the night, he saw nothing of it, but, in its place, the rocks of the Thórdarhöfdi. Then he understood that the kind merchant was an elf, and hastening home, told his wife all that had befallen him, and gave her the cloak. As for the wares he had got instead of his own, he showed them to all his neighbours, and never were the like of them, for goodness, seen in all that country, nor in any other country under the sun.

The Magic Scythe.

A certain day-labourer once started from his home in the south, to earn wages for hay-cutting, in the north country. In the mountains, he was suddenly overtaken by a thick mist and sleet-storm, and lost his way. Fearing to go on further, he pitched his tent in a convenient spot, and taking out his provisions, began to eat.

While he was engaged upon his meal, a brown dog came into the tent, so ill-favoured, dirty, wet, and fierce-eyed, that the poor man felt quite afraid of it, and gave it as much bread and meat as it could devour. This the dog swallowed greedily, and ran off again into the mist. At first the man wondered much to see a dog in such a wild place, where he never expected to meet with a living

creature, but after a while he thought no more about the matter, and having finished his supper, fell asleep, with his saddle for a pillow.

At midnight he dreamed that he saw a tall and aged woman enter his tent, who spoke thus to him, "I am beholden to you, good man, for your kindness to my daughter, but am unable to reward you as you deserve. Here is a scythe which I place beneath your pillow: it is the only gift I can make you, but despise it not. It will surely prove useful to you, as it can cut down all that lies before it. Only beware of putting it into the fire to temper it. Sharpen it, however, you will, but in that way never." So saying she was seen no more.

When the man awoke and looked forth, he found the mist all gone and the sun high in heaven; so getting all his things together and striking his tent, he laid them upon the pack-horses, saddling, last of all, his own horse. But on lifting his saddle from the ground, he found beneath it a small scythe-blade, which seemed well worn and was rusty. On seeing this he, at once, recalled to mind his dream, and taking the scythe with him, set out once more on his way. He soon found again the road which he had lost, and made all speed to reach the well-peopled district to which he was bound.

When he arrived at the north country, he went from house to house, but did not find any employment, for every farmer had labourers enough, and one week of hay-harvest

was already past. He heard it said, however, that one old woman in the district, generally thought by her neighbours to be skilled in magic and very rich, always began her hay-cutting a week later than anybody else, and though she seldom employed a labourer, always contrived to finish it by the end of the season. When, by any chance—and it was a rare one—she did engage a workman, she was never known to pay him for his work.

Now the peasant from the south was advised to ask this old woman for employment, having been warned of her strange habits.

He accordingly went to her house, and offered himself to her as a day-labourer. She accepted his offer, and told him that he might, if he chose, work a week for her, but must expect no payment.

"Except," she said, "you can cut more grass in the whole week than I can rake in on the last day of it."

To these terms he gladly agreed, and began mowing. And a very good scythe he found that to be which the woman had given him in his dream; for it cut well, and never wanted sharpening, though he worked with it for five days unceasingly. He was well content, too, with his place, for the old woman was kind enough to him.

One day, entering the forge next to her house, he saw a vast number of scythe-handles and rakes, and a big heap of blades, and wondered beyond measure what the old lady could want with all these. It was the fifth day—the

Friday—and when he was asleep that night, the same elf-woman whom he had seen upon the mountains, came again to him, and said:

"Large as are the meadows you have mown, your employer will easily be able to rake in all that hay to-morrow, and if she does so, will—as you know—drive you away without paying you. When, therefore, you see yourself worsted, go into the forge, take as many scythe-handles as you think proper, fit their blades to them and carry them out into that part of the land where the hay is yet uncut. There you must lay them on the ground, and you shall see how things go."

This said, she disappeared, and in the morning the labourer getting up, set to work, as usual, at his mowing.

At six o'clock the old witch came out, bringing five rakes with her, and said to the man:

"A goodly piece of ground you have mowed, indeed!"

And so saying she spread the rakes upon the hay. Then the man saw, to his astonishment, that though the one she held in her hand raked in great quantities of hay, the other four raked in no less, each, all of their own accord and with no hand to wield them.

At noon, seeing that the old woman would soon get the best of him, he went into the forge and took out several scythe-handles, to which he fixed their blades, and bringing them out into the field laid them down upon the grass which was yet standing. Then all the scythes set to work

of their own accord, and cut down the grass so quickly that the rakes could not keep pace with them. And so they went on all the rest of the day, and the old woman was unable to rake in all the hay which lay in the fields. After dark, she told him to gather up his scythes and take them into the house again, while she collected her rakes; saying to him:

"You are wiser than I took you to be, and you know more than myself: so much the better for you, for you may stay as long with me as you like."

He spent the whole summer in her employment, and they agreed very well together, mowing with mighty little trouble a vast amount of hay. In the autumn she sent him away, well laden with money, to his own home in the south. Next summer, and more than one summer following he spent in her employ, always being paid as his heart could desire, at the end of the season.

After some years, he took a farm of his own in the south country, and was always looked upon by all his neighbours as an honest man, a good fisherman, and an able workman in whatever work he might put his hand to. He always cut his own hay, never using any scythe but that which the elf-woman had given him upon the mountains; nor did any of his neighbours ever finish their mowing before him.

One summer it chanced that, while he was out fishing, one of his neighbours came to his house and asked his wife

to lend him her husband's scythe, as he had lost his own. The farmer's wife looked for one, but could only find the one upon which her husband set such store. This, however, a little loth, she lent to the man, begging him at the same time never to temper it in the fire, for that, she said, her good man never did. So the neighbour promised, and taking it with him, bound it to a handle and began to work with it. But, sweep as he would, and strain as he would (and sweep and strain he did right lustily), not a single blade of grass fell. Wroth at this, the man tried to sharpen it, but with no avail. Then he took it into his forge, intending to temper it, for, thought he, what harm could that possibly do; but as soon as the flames touched it, the steel melted like wax, and nothing of it was left but a little heap of ashes. Seeing this, he went in haste to the farmer's house, where he had borrowed it, and told the woman what had happened: she was at her wits' end with fright and shame when she heard it, for she knew well enough how her husband set store by this scythe, and how angry he would be at its loss.

And angry indeed he was, when he came home, and he beat his wife well for her folly in lending what was not hers to lend. But his wrath was soon over, and he never again, as he never had before, laid the stick about his wife's shoulders.

Grímsborg.

In the north country, near a farm called Keta, stands a high and steep rock, named Grímsborg. It is said that, in this wild castle, elves have dwelt for many ages, and that their chief has always been called Grímur. Certain old folk, not long dead, used to declare that in their time, four elves dwelt in the Grímsborg, two men and two women, and that of these each pair went in turn to church at Keta, when there was worship, leaving the others at home.

It happened that a bad season, for a long time prevailing, cut off from the inhabitants of that district their supply of food, and drove them into the very jaws of death. Once, during the famine, the farmer of Keta, chancing to pass the Elf-castle, bethought him of what hope might lie in an appeal to the good-will of the chief elf, and going close to the foot of the borg, said in a loud voice:—

"Rich Grímur of the castle, hear our sorrow!
And, of thy pity, ere shall dawn to-morrow,
Cast up beneath the rocks, upon the shore,
A mighty whale, that we may starve no more."

Then he waited to hear if there should be any answer to these words. In a few minutes a voice came from the Elf-castle, saying:—

"Whale, come to land!
Lie stretched upon the sand
In death, that those who fear to die
From famine, find salvation nigh."

As soon as he heard these words, the farmer returned home joyfully, knowing that the days of the famine were ended, since the elves vouchsafed their help. And next morning, going with a large band of men down to the beach, what should he see lying dead upon the rocks, but a fine whale, which had been driven up by the surf in the night!

So ended the famine of Keta, for before the people had finished the flesh of the whale, the season changed and good days came back again.

"Old Beggar."

Near a certain farm, long ago, three children were playing on a grass-mound, a little girl and two boys. After they had played for some time, the girl, who was the youngest of them, found a deep hole in the ground, so deep that she could not see the bottom of it. Stooping down she thrust her hand into it, and shutting her eyes, cried out in fun, "Put something into the palm of an old beggar, and old beggar shall not see." No sooner had she said the words, than a large silver button was placed in her hand.

When the other children saw her good luck they were fit to burst with envy, and the eldest of them stooping down stuck his hand into the hole too, and said, "Put

something into the hand of an old beggar, and old beggar shall not see," for he hoped to get something at least as good as the little girl had got, if not better indeed.

But no! Far from it. When he drew his hand out again, he only found that he had lost the use of it, and what is more, never recovered it again. For the elf, who hated envy more than anything in the world, had given it a squeeze.

TÚNGUSTAPI.

In the olden times, many years ago, a rich farmer lived at Sœlíngsdalstúnga. Of his children, two were sons, by name Arnór and Sveinn. These brothers were both full of promise, though as different in character from one another as day and night. Arnór was a brave, stirring, and active youth; Sveinn, a quiet, gentle, and timid one.

Arnór, who was full of life and spirits, spent all his time in out-door sports and games, in company with the other young men who lived in that valley, and who used to meet together at a rocky hill standing near the farm Túnga, which was called Túngustapi. Their favourite amusement in the winter was to slide in sleighs down the snowy sides of the hill, and in the evenings, the rocks used to echo again with their shouts and merriment, Arnór being always ringleader.

Sveinn scarcely ever took part in their sports, but was wont generally to pass his time in the church, and to wander alone about the foot of the hill, when the rest were not playing there. People used to point at him, and to say that he had to do with the elves who dwelt in the mountain.

Certain it was that, without fail, every new year's night, he used to disappear, and nobody knew where he went to. He often warned his brother not to make such riot on the hill, but Arnór always laughed at him for his pains, and said that "no doubt the elves were none the worse for it. As for stopping their sports on the hill, he saw no fun in that, and go on he would." And go on he did, just the same as ever, though Sveinn assured him, over and over again, that harm would come of his folly.

One new year's night Sveinn had disappeared as usual, but stayed much longer away from home than was his custom. Arnór offered to go and look for him, saying in joke, "He is certainly enjoying the company of his friends the elves." So starting out, he took his way to the mountain.

The night was dark and stormy. When he had arrived at that side of the hill which faced the farm, the rock opened suddenly before him of its own accord, and he saw, within, endless rows of the brightest lamps. At the same time he heard the sound of music, and bethought himself that this must surely be the time for the elves' public

worship. And drawing nearer he came to an open door, through which he looked, and saw vast crowds of people assembled within. One, who seemed to be a priest, stood, dressed in splendid robes, by an altar, round which were placed numberless burning candles. Arnór then went further in still, and saw his brother Sveinn kneeling before the altar, while the priest, laying his hands on his head, was speaking some words over him. Round about him stood many others, all in sacred robes, so that Arnór guessed at once that they were making his brother an elfin-priest.

Then he cried aloud, "Sveinn! Come! Come with me! You are running the risk of death!"

Whereupon Sveinn started up, and, turning towards the door near which his brother stood, made as if he would hurry to him. But the priest, who stood before the altar, said:

"Shut instantly the door! and let us wreak vengeance upon the man who has dared to place his feet within our holy place. But thou, Sveinn, must go from among us for thy brother's fault; and, inasmuch as thou wert willing to go to him, and loved more his shameless call than these our sacred rites, thou shalt fall down dead whenever thine eyes again see me standing in my robes before this altar."

Arnór now saw those who had been standing round the altar, lift his brother in their arms and vanish with him

through a distant arch of rock. At the same moment the sound of a bell rang out above him, and all the assembled crowd rushed with one accord to the doorway. He himself ran through it first, back into the outer night, and sped towards his home. But soon he heard behind him the sound of following feet, and the weird tramp of fleet elfin horses. And one of the foremost riders cried with a loud voice—

"Ride! Ride! Ride on!
For the slopes are dark and the path is dim;
He flees before, ride after him!
Let us, with fell enchantment, spread
Confusion o'er his feet and head,
In order that he
May never see
To-morrow's sun! Ride! Ride! Ride on!"

Then the whole troop rode between Arnór and the farm and drove him back. On they went over hill and rock and morass, Arnór, whose dread clogged his feet, knowing not whither he fled. At last he came to some slopes far east of his home, and there, his strength forsaking him, he fell down fainting, and the whole elfin-troop rode over him, bruising him with the hoofs of their goblin-horses, till he was more dead than alive.

As to Sveinn, he came home just when the household, tired of waiting, were going to bed. He did not utter a word about himself or his own long absence, but bade them at once make search for his brother Arnór. All the

"Then the whole troop rode between Arnór and the farm, and drove him back."

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servants, therefore, went out and spent the rest of the night in vainly trying to find him. But he was found at last by a farmer who lived to the eastward, and who, as he rode to early worship, at Túnga, next morning, stumbled across him lying at the foot of the slopes. Arnór was sensible, but dying, and so weak that he only found strength and words to tell the farmer what had happened, and to beg him not to take him home again, but leave him, before he fell back dead.

Ever since that those mounds have been called "the slopes of death!"

Sveinn was never himself again, but became more sullen, silent, and strange than he had been before. And it was noticed from that time forth he neither went near nor looked towards the rocky mountain, Túngustapi. He seemed to care no more for worldly things, and at last gave them up with their interests for ever, by becoming a monk, and shutting himself up in the monastery of Helgafell. He was so learned that none of the brethren were by any means a match for him, and he sang the mass so sweetly that the like of it—they said—had never been heard before. So they looked on him with awe, and as on one who is not of this world, and he was, as it were, head over them all.

Now, after a while, his father, at Túnga, being far on in years, fell sick for the last time, and yearning to see his son before he died, sent for Sveinn to come to him.

Sveinn at once obeyed the bidding, but, as he departed, said sadly to the monks who had assembled to wish him God-speed:

"May it fare well with you all for ever, for perchance I may never come back with life again."

He arrived at Túnga the Saturday before Easter, and found his father so void of strength as to be scarcely able to speak. But the old man made it understood that he wished his son to sing the mass on Easter day in the church, whither he himself would be carried to die. Sveinn, strangely loth, consented, but only on condition that the church door should be kept firmly shut during the whole service, for upon the fulfilment of this something told him that his life depended.

Easter morning has arrived, and the dying man is borne by his servants into the church. Then Sveinn, attired in his priestly robes, stands upon the steps of the altar and sweetly sings the mass. So sweetly, that all there present think that never before have they heard a voice like this, and they kneel with the very breath hushed upon their lips to listen to him the better.

But when, at the close of the service, the priest turns from the altar, and with outstretched hands pronounces solemnly the blessing, suddenly a strong wind from the west strikes the church, and the door, bursting from its fastenings, falls heavily inwards. All turn to look, and they see through the empty frame that the rocky hill

near at hand yawns open, and that within it gleam countless rows of burning lamps. And when they turn again towards the altar, Sveinn has fallen down and lies dead where he has just pronounced the blessing. And his father has fallen also from his couch, his face likewise white with death.

Then the people knew whence the west wind came, and how Sveinn has been slain by the revengeful elves.

For the farmer, who had found Arnór at the foot of the slopes, has long ago told them the story; and they whisper to one another that Sveinn has seen the elfin-priest standing robed at his altar.

So the father and son were buried on the same day.

But the church at Túnga now stands elsewhere, that it may be out of sight of the elfin temple, whose altar is to the west and whose door to the east.

The Father of Eighteen Elves.

At a certain farm, long ago, it happened that all the household were out one day, making hay, except the goodwoman and her only child, a boy of four years old. He was a strong, handsome, lusty little fellow, who could already speak almost as well as his elders, and was looked upon by his parents with great pride and hope. But as his mother had plenty of other work to do besides

watching him, she was obliged to leave him alone for a short time, while she went down to the brook to wash the milk-pails. So she left him playing in the door of the cottage, and came back again as soon as she had placed the milk-pails to dry.

Directly she spoke to the child, it began to cry in a strange and unnatural way, which amazed her not a little, as it had always been so quiet and sweet-tempered. When she tried to make the child speak to her, as it was wont to do, it only yelled the more, and so it went on for a long time, always crying and never would be soothed, till the mother was in despair at so wonderful a change in her boy, who now seemed to have lost his senses.

Filled with grief, she went to ask the advice of a learned and skilful woman in the neighbourhood, and confided to her all her trouble.

Her neighbour asked her all sorts of questions—How long ago this change in the child's manner had happened? What his mother thought to be the cause of it? and so forth. To all of which the wretched woman gave the best answers she could. At last the wise woman said:

"Do you not think, my friend, that the child you now have is a changeling? Without doubt it was put at your cottage door in the place of your son, while you were washing the milk-pails."

"I know not," replied the other, "but advise me how to find it out."

So the wise woman said, "I will tell you. Place the child where he may see something he has never seen before, and let him fancy himself alone. As soon as he believes no one to be near him, he will speak. But you must listen attentively, and if the child says something that declares him to be a changeling, then beat him without mercy."

That was the wise woman's advice, and her neighbour, with many thanks for it, went home.

When she got to her house, she set a cauldron in the middle of the hearth, and taking a number of rods, bound them end to end, and at the bottom of them fastened a porridge-spoon. This she stuck into the cauldron in such a way that the new handle she had made for it reached right up the chimney: as soon as she had prepared everything, she fetched the child, and placing him on the floor of the kitchen left him and went out, taking care, however, to leave the door ajar, so that she could hear and see all that went on.

When she had left the room, the child began to walk round and round the cauldron, and eye it carefully, and after a while he said:

"Well! I am old enough, as anybody may guess from my beard, and the father of eighteen elves, but never, in all my life, have I seen so long a spoon to so small a pot."

On hearing this the goodwoman waited not a moment,

but rushed into the room and snatching up a bundle of fire-wood flogged the changeling with it, till he kicked and screamed again. In the midst of all this, the door opened, and a strange woman, bearing in her arms a beautiful boy, entered and said, "See how we differ! I cherish and love your son, while you beat and illuse my husband;" with these words, she gave back to the farmer's wife her own son, and taking the changeling by the hand, disappeared with him.

But the little boy grew up to manhood, and fulfilled all the hope and promise of his youth.

Blue Face.

It happened once that a farmer's daughter in the east country was lost, and, though great search was made for her, was never found again. Her parents were overwhelmed with grief, and the farmer went to the house of a priest who was deemed wiser than his neighbours, and who received him kindly, listening attentively to the man's account of his misfortune, and to his request for help to find out whether his daughter were living or dead. The priest told him that the girl had been stolen by elves, adding, "Nor would seeing her again be any pleasure to you."

But the father could not think this, so fond had he been of his daughter, but urged the priest over and over again to aid him in getting her back. At length, the latter, worn out by continual entreaties, agreed to do so, and appointed an evening on which the farmer should come to his house.

At the appointed time the farmer repaired to the priest's dwelling, who, as soon as the rest of his household had retired to bed, led him out of the house to where a horse was standing ready saddled. The priest mounted the horse, and making the farmer mount behind him, put spurs to his steed, and they rode away. After they had ridden for a time, the peasant knew not how long, they came to the sea, over which the horse galloped as if it had been dry land. At last they came to some high rocks, which rose sheer from the sea, and upon which the waves dashed. Under these the priest guided the horse, until they saw before them an opening like the door of a house, into which the peasant looked and could perceive a bright light, and many people hurrying to and fro. Among them was a woman whose face was pale-blue and who had upon her forehead a white cross. Then the priest asked the peasant how he admired this woman. "Not at all," said he. The priest answered, "That is your daughter, and I can, if you will it, get her back again for you; but I warn you that on account of her having lived with the elves, and through the force of their strange arts, her nature has been changed

into a wild one like theirs." The peasant said, "Nay! let us return at once; my heart does not yearn towards her."

So they returned over the sea and over the land, and their fleet horse took them home again ere any knew of their departure.

The Bishop and the Elves.

A bishop, travelling to visit the various parts of his diocese, took with him, among other servants, as was the custom in those times (for this was long ago), a maid-servant to cook his meals for him. One evening he rested and caused the tents to be pitched, and the camp for the night to be made upon a certain mountain.

Next morning the maid was missing. Search was made, high and low, far and wide, for her, but all in vain, and the bishop shrewdly suspected that she had been stolen by the elves.

Now he had in his retinue of servants a certain man, who, from his great stature and strength, went by the name of "John the Giant." Accordingly he called John the Giant to him, and said to him:

"Sit you here, upon my bed, while I go out, and do not stir for an instant from the tent. If it should happen that the maid come in, seize her and hold her fast; and,

above all things, do not let her go till I return, however much she may struggle, and however much she may beg. Take care, too, how you believe what she says, for to deceive you into leaving her free, she will not stick at a lie."

With these words, the bishop took his staff, and going out drew with it three circles, one within the other, on the ground outside the tent, and went away without anybody seeing in what direction.

Meanwhile John the Giant sat upon the bed and waited, listening and looking intently, but moving neither hand nor foot. After a little while the maid, who had been lost, appeared near the tent, without any shoes upon her feet, and running into it, went up to the pillow of the bishop's bed as if to get something from underneath it. But John the Giant was too quick for her, and starting up flung his arms round her and held her tight. At first she begged him to let her go, saying that the bishop had sent her, and that she must make haste back to him again. Then, as soon as she saw that John the Giant turned a deaf ear to all her entreaties, and did not believe or care for a word she said, she began to struggle, and fought so sturdily, that it was almost more than he could do to hold her.

Just at this time the other servants outside saw twelve mounted men, dressed in blue, ride towards the tent, stopping, however, suddenly, as if they had been shot,

when they came to the circles which were drawn round it, and immediately vanishing away.

For these were magic circles which the bishop had made with his holy staff, and nothing evil or ungodly could pass beyond them.

Soon afterwards the bishop himself returned and told his serving men to bind the maid until such time as her temper should be less perverse. Then he again went away, and before long the girl came to her own good senses again. When the others saw this they asked her to tell them what had befallen her, and how she had left the camp without awakening anybody. She declared that in the night a man had come to her bedside, taken her hand and led her out, she not knowing why or whither they were going till they came to a certain mound, into which they entered. That here she found a great many people assembled in a large hall, at the end of which was a raised daïs, with many women collected together upon it. That these women had made her go to bed, and placed beside her couch a spinning-wheel and bundle of hemp, bidding her spin it when she awoke. "But," she said, "in the morning the bishop, with his staff in his hand, came to my bedside and bade me run back here and fetch his keys from under his pillow. I rose and ran in such haste that I had not even time to put on my shoes."

And this was the end of the matter. The bishop came

back soon afterwards, not ill-pleased with his morning's work; for being pretty well skilled in magic and the like, and being, moreover, a very holy man, and a right-determined one to boot, he had played the elves a pretty trick that day, in getting his maid-servant out of their hands almost as soon as they had got her into theirs. And, as far as that went, he could have done it a hundred times just as easily as once; and in a different way each time.

Who built Reynir Church?

A certain farmer once lived at Reynir, in the district of Mýrdal. He was ordered by the bishop to build a good church hard by his farm-house, but had so much difficulty in getting enough timber before the hay-making season, and then so much trouble in finding proper builders, that he feared he should be unable to finish the work before the winter.

One day as he was walking in his field, thinking sadly over the matter, and how he should excuse himself to the bishop for failing to obey his bidding, a strange man, whom he had never seen before, met him, and stopping him, offered him his services in building the church, declaring that he should require the services of no other workman. Then the farmer asked him what payment he

would think the due meed of such labour, and the man made the following condition—that the farmer should either find out his name before he had finished the church, or else give him his son, who was then a little boy six years old. The farmer thought these easy terms enough, forsooth, and laughing in his sleeve, gladly consented to them.

So the strange builder set to work, and worked with a will, by day and by night, speaking but little to anybody, until the church rose beneath his hands as quickly as if by magic, and the farmer plainly foresaw that it would be finished even before the hay-making was over.

But by this time he had rather changed his mind about the payment he had before thought so easy, and was very far from feeling glad that the end of the church-building was so near; for do what he would, ask whom he would, and search the country round as he would, and had done, he could not, for the life of him, find out the name of his quick-handed mason. Still the church went on not a whit slower for his anxiety, and autumn came, and a very little more labour would finish the building.

One day, the last day of the work, he happened to be wandering outside his field, brooding, in deep grief, over what now seemed to be the heavy price he would have to pay to his master-builder, and threw himself down upon a grass-mound which he came to; he had scarcely

lain there a minute, when he heard some one singing, and listening, he found that the voice was that of a mother lulling her child, and came from inside the mound upon which he had flung himself down. This is what it said:

> "Soon will thy father Finnur come from Reynir,
> Bringing a little playmate for thee, here."

And these words were repeated over and over again; but the farmer, who pretty soon guessed what they meant, did not wait to hear how many times the mother thought fit to sing them, or what the child seemed to think of them, but started up and ran with all speed, his heart filled with joy, to the church, in which he found the builder just nailing the last plank over the altar.

"Well done, friend Finnur!" said he, "how soon you have finished your work!"

No sooner had these words passed his lips than friend Finnur, letting the plank fall from his hand, vanished, and was never seen again.

Katla's Dream.

A certain chief, named Már, lived, long ago, at Reykhólar. His wife, who was of noble family, was called Katla. Once, as was his custom, Már had ridden to the Diet, leaving his wife at home.

One morning, during his absence, Katla, feeling tired and heavy, went to bed, not very long after she had risen from it, and fell into a deep sleep. At noon her attendants went to her to call her, but, try as they would, could not wake her; so, fearing that she was dead, they called her foster-father, who lived in the house, and told him of her state. He went to the side of her bed, and himself endeavoured to rouse her, but quite in vain. Then, looking attentively at her, he said, "She is not dead: the flame of life is still flickering in her bosom, but I am no more able to wake her than you were." And, with these words, he sat down beside her couch, and kept close watch over her for four whole days and nights.

On the fifth day Katla awoke, and seemed to be overcome with sorrow; but no one dared to ask her what was the cause of it.

Soon after this her husband came back home from the Diet; but his wife was no longer the same that he had left behind him. She was changed. She neither went to

meet him, as she was wont to do, nor when he came did she say "Welcome" to him, nor salute him with her usual love, nor show joy to see him safe.

Wondering and grieved at her strange manner, he asked her attendants apart what had befallen her, and why she behaved thus; but they could only tell him that she had slept unceasingly for four days and four nights, and on awaking had shown this sorrow, without ever telling anybody the reason of it, or what ailed her. On hearing this, Már took Katla herself apart, and urged her to tell him what ailed her,—whether aught had befallen her in her long sleep, assuring her that she would lighten her load of sorrow in thus giving him the half of it. At last, yielding to her husband's prayers, she spoke as follows:—

"As you know, my husband, I fell into a deep sleep early one morning while you were away. I had not slept long, when there came to my bedside a beautiful lady, richly dressed, who spoke sweetly to me, and telling me that she lived at the farm Thverá, not far hence, begged me to go back with her some part of the way thither. As soon as I rose to comply with her wish, she placed her gloves in my bed, saying, 'These shall take your place while you are away.' Then we went out, and came soon to a large lake, as clear and as smooth as glass, upon which, near the shore, a gaily-painted boat was moored. Here I would part from the lady, and wished her God-speed; but she, thanking me for having come so far with her, held out her

hand, as if to bid me farewell, crying, 'Will you not say farewell to Alvör?'

"No sooner had I stretched forth mine in return, than she grasped it tightly, and leaping from the shore into the skiff with me, rowed it swiftly to a small island which stood in the midst of the lake. Now, indeed, I felt only too well that she had all power over me, and that I was unable to resist her. She saw that I was filled with dread, and tried to calm my fears, showing me every kindness and courtesy, and assuring me that it was Fate alone which had compelled her to treat me thus. 'I will,' she said, 'soon take you safely home again.'

"When we had come to the island, I saw that there stood upon it a castle, more beautiful than anything I had ever seen or heard of before. 'This is mine,' said Alvör; and leading me into it by the hand, she took me to her own room, where many ladies were sitting. There she made me enter a bath of sweet water, and when I had bathed, she took me to a beautiful bed which stood in the room, covered with curtains of the richest stuff, and filled with soft down. In this I fell asleep after I had drunk a cup of some rare wine which was handed me. When I awoke, I found on a couch near me a mantle worked richly in gold, which the lady who sat by my side bade me put on, together with an embroidered dress which she gave me. When I was dressed, she threw also over me her own mantle, which was daintily wrought in gold and

"No sooner had I stretched forth mine in return, than she grasped it tightly, and leaping from the shore into the skiff with me, rowed it swiftly to a small island."

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lined with fur. Besides all this, she gave me five rings of red gold, a golden band for my hair, and a costly belt, begging me to keep them all as gifts. After I had thus attired myself, she bade me follow her to the dining-hall, and we went there with her, eight ladies in all.

"All the walls of the room were hung with cloth of woven gold, and the tables were crowded with silver vessels and flagons, and with gold inlaid horns; and round the table sat many handsome men, splendidly attired. At the high table stood a throne, and near this I saw a man, dressed in rich silk, lying asleep on a couch. Alvör went up to him and woke him, and I heard that she called him Kári.

"He started up from his slumber, and said to her, 'Why have you broken my rest? Have you aught of good tidings to tell me? or, perchance, have you brought Katla hither?'

"As soon as he saw that I was in the hall, he came to me, and taking me by the hand, led me to the throne, where he made me sit, and sat beside me. Then the Lady Alvör pointed to us, and cried out to the guests, 'See! the bride and bridegroom!'. Whereupon they shouted, as with one voice, and drank and made merry till nightfall. And through all this din of revel, Alvör told me that for that night I was to share the couch of Kári; but I, full wroth, withdrawing myself from her side, said:

"'Never will I do this thing! Far too dearly do I love my husband to share the love of any other.'

"The lady answered, 'If you say nay, bale and bann will cling to you for ever: be wise, therefore, and consent.'

"Wretched that I was, I knew not what to do, or whither to turn myself, for neither comfort nor aid was near, and I was as a lamb in the midst of a herd of wolves. They led me to the couch in which I had slept before, and then Kári came to me, and offered me all he had, if I would only love him. I told him that his love was hopeless, but he would not hear me. Then he brought me a horn of wine; and after he had tasted it himself first, made me drink of it, saying:

"'Rather would I struggle with Helja than see sorrow in your eyes. Be comforted; you shall soon return to your home.'

"With these words he lay beside me; and whether it were the force of his entreaties, or the beauty of his presence, or the weight of the wine upon my soul, I cannot tell, but I no longer opposed his love, though the while my heart was filled with grief.

"And so in sorrow passed two days and nights; nor could all the kindness of the attendants, and of all around me, comfort me. At last Kári said to me, 'Call the son whom you shall bear to me by my name, and give him from his father, whom he shall never see, this belt of wrought gold, and this knife with the haft of cunning workmanship, and let them be heirlooms in his family.' And he bade

me place the belt and knife, together with the embroidered garments and costly ornaments which I had worn while with him, in a sack, and take them home with me.

" 'Show them,' he said, 'to your husband Már, and tell him the whole truth, though it be a grief and woe to your heart to do so; for it is but just, and your duty. Let him aid you in building a farm at Thverá, where you shall see two small hillocks, which shall be your money-mounds. In that place you shall found a great and noble family. Now I must leave you, and you will never see me again, for,' said he sadly, 'the hours of my life are numbered.'

" When he had finished speaking, Alvör the lady took my hand and led me out; and as I left the hall I heard a loud and echoing sound, and turning my head to see whence it came, behold Kári lay dead, for his heartstrings had broken with exceeding love and sorrow. So the lady rowed me again in the boat across the lake and brought me home, and took the gloves out of my bed.

" As she left me she said, 'May it fare well with you, though you have caused but sorrow to me in breaking my son's heart for love and anguish. Enjoy all the wealth you have, and be happy.' So saying, she was no more with me.

" This is the end of my dream. Therefore, my husband, as you are a just and true man, weigh my fault against its causes, and forgive me. Truly my love for you has not one whit departed."

So she showed Már all the beautiful and costly things that she had brought with her from Alvör's castle.

In the summer she gave birth to a son, a lovely child, and exceeding all other children in mind and form, whom she called, as she had promised his father—Kári. But she never loved the boy with a true mother's love; though on the other hand Már doted upon him as if he had been his own son. Soon after, they built a new farm at Thverá, where they found the two money-mounds, as Kári had promised, and, unestranged by Katla's dream, dwelt there happy and prosperous to a ripe old age.

The Elfin Lover.

A certain rich farmer and his wife had two daughters, who were named Margrèt and Olöf.

Margrèt was the darling of her parents' hearts, and used in the summer to take care of a dairy and pasture in the mountains, for her father and mother always put more trust in her than in anybody else.

One summer it happened, that, while she was sitting milking the ewes, a little boy came to her several evenings in succession, and brought with him a small wooden jug, which he asked her to fill for him with milk. This Margrèt always refused to do, and as he still came day after day with the same request, she at last became angry, and

one evening threatened him with a good whipping if he troubled her again.

" For," she said, " I should think I had plenty to do without giving milk to all the little boys who choose to come with jugs for it. Begone !"

At this the child ran back crying to his mother, who was an elfwoman, and who lived near the mountain-farm, and told her how harshly Margrèt had spoken to him. The elfwoman was mighty wroth at this, and said :

" Harsh words shall meet with a harsh lot. This shall be Margrèt's fate. She shall spend and fritter away everything that comes into her hands just as lavishly as she has stingily refused to give you milk. She shall try how she likes poverty and loss of trust." And true enough she certainly did become such a spendthrift, that her father and mother soon noticed it, and not caring that she should waste all they had, withdrew her from the mountain pasture and sent Olöf there in her stead.

When the latter had been there some little time, the same child came to her as she sat out in the evening milking the ewes, and, holding out his little porringer, said :

" Olöf, my mother sends her love to you, and begs you to give her a little milk for her child. When your sister Margrèt was here I often asked her for some, but she was harsh and said nay, and drove me out of her sight."

Olöf was tender-hearted, and willingly gave the boy some milk to drink himself and filled his jug for him, at the same

time telling him to come whenever he liked. The boy ran off to his mother and told her how different things were now, and how kindly the girl had spoken to him and treated him. Whereupon the elfwoman said:

"Good words shall have a good reward. This shall be Olöf's fate. All that comes into her hands shall turn to fair luck, and all she has shall increase as many-fold as her kindness to you has been greater than her sister's cruelty."

So for some summers the boy came often to Olöf for milk. Now one autumn her companions in the mountain-farm noticed that she was soon to give birth to a child, but being discreet, and moreover loving her well, they kept their discovery from all else, though they could not help whispering among themselves that the boy who used to beg for milk was just as fond of Olöf herself as of her milk-pails, if not more so.

One night Olöf was delivered of a child. As soon as it was born, an old man and old woman, together with the boy who had so often visited Olöf on the mountains, came into the cottage, and taking the child in their arms went out with it, after bidding her an affectionate farewell. All this her companions saw, and that the youth often came and spoke with her, though Olöf fully believed that not only the birth of her child, but also the visits of the elves, were unknown to all but herself.

Time passed without any new occurrence, until Olöf's mother fell into a sickness which was her last. After her

mother's death, Olöf took her place in keeping the house, but never seemed quite happy after what had happened at the mountain-hut. Many fine young fellows wooed and wished to win her, but she said nay to them all, and sent them all off without so much as turning her head to look after them.

At last one came, to whom Olöf's father, wearied with her eternal refusals, bade her give herself. For some while she would not listen to him, but at length consented to marry him only on the condition that he would never allow anyone to pass the winter with them, until he had first spoken to her and asked her leave to do so. He made her this promise, and they were speedily married and went to live at the husband's farm (for he was a farmer, well to do), which was in the mountains, far from her old home.

She had not been there long, when her mother-in-law saw that some weight lay upon Olöf's heart, and that her eyes were often filled with tears, and begged her to tell her the cause of her grief. But Olöf would not be persuaded, for a long time, and always put the other off with shirking answers. At last, however, her mother-in-law promised never, as long as she lived, to repeat to anyone the truth, if Olöf would only tell it her. So Olöf told it her, and when she found how the good woman pitied her, and how kind and leal was that heart into which she poured her sorrow, she wondered why she had not trusted her at first.

For there is no balm like pity to a wounded soul, how-

ever deep the wound and however long it may have ached in secret.

In the third year after Olöf's marriage, but the twelfth from the birth of her child in the mountain-hut, it happened at autumntide, towards the end of the hay harvest, that a man and a young boy came to the farmer's house and gave him greeting. He had never seen them before, but he noticed that they kept their hats slouched down over their brows, as if they were unwilling to be known. When the farmer had returned kindly their salutation, they begged him to allow them to pass the winter in his house. The farmer answered:

"It is not my custom to receive strangers thus. It is long since I have done so."

But on their becoming more urgent, he said:

"I cannot bid you welcome, nor will I send you away, until I have first seen my wife, and spoken to her about it."

The man answered, "Truly you do well, and it becomes you to let your wife have the upper hand of you. If you send us away, be sure that all your neighbours shall know which of you two is master."

This taunt was more than the farmer could bear, so he promised to let them stay with him. Then going into the house he met Olöf, who said to him:

"What men are these?"

"I know not," he replied: "they have come to me to

ask lodging for the winter, and they urged me so, that I promised it them, and bade them welcome to stay with us."

Then Olöf said, "In so doing you have broken your promise to me, but some voice in this matter I will have. These men shall not sleep in the house with the rest of the servants, but shall spend the winter in one of the outbuildings."

And she left him, and went to her own room weeping.

So the farmer made ready one of the outlying buildings, furnishing it with every necessary from the farm, and gave it up as a winter dwelling for the two strangers; but his wife never set foot inside its door, nor went near it. The man and boy took up their abode there, joining the farmer's family every evening in the family room, as was the custom, but always sitting apart in a dark corner, and never speaking unless the farmer first addressed them. Olöf always seemed as if she did not see them, never even once looking at or speaking to them. Thus the winter passed away and spring came.

Now it happened one Sunday, that the farmer and his wife were going to church in order to take the Holy Communion, having bidden farewell to all their household. When they were a little way from home, the farmer asked Olöf:

"Have you bidden farewell to all at home?"

She said, "To all."

Then he asked again, "Have you bidden farewell to the strangers also?"

"No," she said, "I have not, nor need I, for the whole winter through I have neither spoken to nor looked at them. How then can I have trespassed against them?"

But the farmer was not well-pleased at this, and urged her to return and bid the strangers farewell, and the more she refused, the more he waxed wroth, till at length she seeing that he would be obeyed, said:

"Well! I will return, as you have bidden, but for what comes of it, blame yourself, not me."

She went, and the farmer waited for her, but she stayed so long away that he turned back after her, to see what had delayed her. When he came to the outhouse in which the two strangers lived, he found the door unlatched, and stopping by it to listen if his wife were there, he heard her say these words:

"This is the sweetest draught that ever passed my lips from thine."

He waited yet a while to hear if more would be said, but no other sound came from the house. So he went in, and there on the couch lay his wife and the stranger dead (for their hearts had broken from love and sorrow); and over them the young boy stood weeping. When he asked the lad what this meant, and how death had befallen them, he only said, "These are my parents."

But his mother told him Olöf's story, for she held

herself free from her promise now that Olöf was dead. And the farmer, full of grief, bade the lad welcome to stay with him, and as he had been Olöf's child, so to be his. But from the moment when Olöf and her elfin lover were hidden by the earth, the boy was no more seen.

The Man-Whale.

In ancient times, in the south part of the country, it was the custom to go in a boat, at a certain season of the year, from the mainland to the cliffs, Geirfuglasker, to procure sea-birds and the eggs which they were in the habit of laying there. The passage to these rocks was always looked upon as an unsafe one, as they stood some way out at sea, and a constant and heavy surf beat upon them.

It happened once that some men went thither in a boat at the proper season for the purpose, as the weather seemed to promise a long calm. When they arrived at the rocks, some of them landed, the rest being left to take care of the boat. Suddenly a heavy wind came on, and the latter were forced to leave the island in haste, as the sea became dangerous and the surf beat furiously upon the cliffs. All those who had landed were enabled to reach the boat in time, at the signal from their companions, except one, a young and active man, who, having gone in his zeal higher and

farther than the others, was longer in getting down to the beach again. By the time he did get down, the waves were so high, that though those in the boat wrought their best to save him, they could not get near enough to him, and so were compelled for their own lives' sake to row to shore. They determined, however, when the storm should abate its fury, to return to the rocks and rescue him, knowing that unless they did so and the wind were soon spent, the youth could not but perish from cold and hunger. Often they tried to row to the Geirfuglasker, but, the whole season through, they were unable to approach them, as the wind and surf always drove them back. At last, deeming the young man dead, they gave up the attempt and ceased to risk their lives in seas so wrathful.

So time passed away, until the next season for seeking sea-birds came round, and the weather being now calm, the peasants embarked in their boat for the Geirfuglasker. When they landed upon the cliffs, great was their astonishment at seeing come towards them a man, for they thought that no one could live in so wild and waste a spot. When the man drew near them, and they recognized him as the youth who had been left there the year before, and whom they had long ago given up as lost, their wonder knew no bounds, and they guessed that he had the elves to thank for his safety. They asked him all sorts of questions. What had he lived upon? Where had he slept at night?

What had he done for fire in the winter? and so forth, but he would give them none but vague replies, which left them just as wise as they were before. He said, however, he had never once left the cliff, and that he had been very comfortable there, wanting for nothing. They then rowed him to land, where all his friends and kin received him with unbounded amazement and joy, but, question him as they would, could get but mighty little out of him concerning his life on the cliffs the whole year through. With time, the strangeness of this event and the wonder it had awakened passed away from men's minds, and it was little if at all more spoken of.

One Sunday in the summer, certain things that took place in the church at Hvalsnes filled people with astonishment. There were large numbers there, and among them the young man who had passed a year on the cliffs of the Geirfuglasker. When the service was over and the folk began to leave the church, what should they find standing in the porch but a beautiful cradle with a baby in it. The coverlet was richly embroidered, and wrought of a stuff that nobody had ever seen before. But the strangest part of the business was, that though everybody looked at the cradle and child, nobody claimed either one or the other, or seemed to know anything whatever about them. Last of all came the priest out of church, who, after he had admired and wondered at the cradle and child as much as the others, asked whether there was no one present to whom they

belonged. No one answered. Then he asked whether there was no one present who had enough interest in the child to desire him to baptize it. No one either answered or came forward.

At this moment the priest happened to cast his eyes on the young peasant, concerning whose sojourn on the Geirfuglasker rocks he had always felt particularly suspicious, and calling him aside, asked him whether he had any idea who its father was, and whether he would like the child baptized. But the youth turning angrily from him declared that he knew nothing whatever about the child or its father.

"What care I," he said, "whether you baptize the child or no? Christen it or drown it, just which you think fit; neither it, nor its father, nor its mother, are aught to me."

As these words left his lips, there suddenly appeared in the porch a woman, handsomely apparelled, of great beauty and noble stature, whom no one had ever seen before. She snatched the coverlet from the cradle, and flinging it in through the door of the church, said:

"Be witnesses all, that I wish not the church to lose its dues for this child's baptism."

Then turning to the young peasant, and stretching out her hands towards him, she cried, "But thou, O faithless coward, disowner of thy child, shalt become a whale, the fiercest and most dreaded in the whole wide sea!"

With these words, she seized the cradle and disappeared.

The priest, however, took the coverlet which she had flung into the church, and made of it an altar-cloth, the handsomest that had ever been seen. As for the young peasant, he went mad on the spot; and, rushing down to the Holmur Cliffs, which rise sheer from the deep water, made as if he would throw himself from them. But while he hesitated for a moment on the brink, lo! a fearful change came over him, and he began to swell to a vast size, till, at last, he became so large, that the rock could no longer bear him, but crumbling beneath him hurled him into the sea. There he was changed into a great whale, and the red cap which he had been wearing, became a red head.

After this, his mother confessed that her son had spent the year with the elves upon the Geirfuglasher. On his being left on the rocks by his companions (so he had declared to her), he had at first wandered about in despair, filled only with the thought of throwing himself into the waves to die a speedy death rather than suffer all the pangs of hunger and cold; but a lovely girl had come to him, and telling him she was an elf, had asked him to spend the winter with her. She had borne him a child before the end of the year, and only allowed him to go to shore when his companions came again to the cliffs, on condition that he would have this child baptized when he should find it in the church-porch, threatening him, if he failed in the fulfilment of this, with the severest punishment and most hapless fate.

Now Redhead, the whale, took up his abode in the Faxafjörd, and wrought mischief there without end, destroying boats innumerable, and drowning all their crews, so that at last it became unsafe to cross any part of the bay, and nothing could either prevent his ravages or drive him away. After matters had gone on like this for some time, the whale began to haunt a narrow gulf between Akranes and Kjarlarnes, which is now called after him, Hvalfjördur.

At that time there lived at Saurbœr, in Hvalfjardarströnd, an aged priest, who, though hale and hearty, was blind. He had two sons and a daughter, who were all in the flower of their youth, and who were their father's hope and stay, and, as it were, the very apple of his eye. His sons were in the habit of fishing in Hvalfjördur, and one day when they were out they encountered the whale, Redhead, who overthrew their boat and drowned them both. When their father heard of their death, and how it had been brought about, he was filled with grief, but uttered not a word at the time.

Now it must be known that this old priest was well skilled in all magical arts.

Not long after this, one fine morning in the summer, he bade his daughter take his hand and guide him down to the sea-shore. When he arrived there, he planted the end of the staff which he had brought with him, in the waves, and leaning on the handle fell into deep thought.

After a few minutes he asked his daughter, "How looks the sea?"

She answered, "My father, it is as bright and smooth as a mirror."

Again, a few minutes, and he repeated, "How looks the sea?"

She replied, "I see on the horizon a black line, which draws nearer and nearer, as it were a shoal of whales, swimming quickly into the bay."

When the old man heard that the black line was approaching them, he bade the girl lead him along the shore towards the inland end of the bay. She did so, and the black surging sea followed them constantly. But as the water became shallower, the girl saw that the foam arose, not from a shoal of whales, as she had thought at first, but from the swimming of a single huge whale with a red head, who came rapidly towards them along the middle of the bay, as if drawn to them by some unseen power. A river ran into the extreme end of the gulf, and the old priest begged his daughter to lead him still on along its banks. As they went slowly up the stream, the old man feeling every footstep before him, the whale followed them, though with a heavy struggle, as the river contained but little water for so vast a monster to swim in. Yet forward they went, and the whale still after them, till the river became so narrow between its high walls of rock, that the ground beneath their feet quaked as the whale followed

them. After a while they came to a waterfall, up which the monster leaped with a spring that made the land tremble far and wide, and the very rocks totter. But they came at last to a lake, from which the river rose, whose course they had followed from the sea; the lake Hvalvatn. Here the heart of the monster broke from very toil and anguish, and he disappeared from their eyes.

When the old priest returned home, after having charmed the whale thus to his death, all the people from far and near thanked him for having rid their coasts of so dread a plague.

And in case anybody should doubt the truth of this story of Redhead, the man-whale, we may as well say that on the shores of the lake Hvalvatn, mighty whale-bones were found lying long after the date of this tale.

Valbjörg the Unelfed.

In the east country, not far from the Lakes of Wool, as they are called, lived a certain farmer, who had a son named Sigurdur.

It happened one year, that this peasant had lost all his sheep upon the mountains, and, as his flocks were nearly all that he had to depend upon for his livelihood, had taken the loss very much to heart, and sent four or five men in succession to search far and near, through hill and valley,

" After a while they came to a waterfall, up which the monster leaped with a spring that made the land tremble far and wide."

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for the missing sheep, which could not, in the short time that had passed since they were lost sight of, have strayed very far.

But to the farmer's great distress neither sheep nor shepherds ever came to light again.

One fine day Sigurdur, who was a sturdy fellow and brave to boot, said to his father, "My father, I will go and try my luck in searching for your lost servants and flocks; give me God speed."

His parents were mightily against this, "for," said they, "we would rather lose a thousand servants and a thousand flocks than our son."

But Sigurdur laughed at their fears, and said "go he would, and go he must." Accordingly, go he did, having asked the blessing of his parents. Over hill and through valley he went, just as he had heard his father bid the shepherds go; but though he looked far and near, and though he toiled himself well weary, nothing did he see of either men or sheep. At last he came to some large lakes, round the shores of which lay vast masses of wool spread out for drying. On the other side of these, lay some pasture lands of the richest grass, upon which he saw flocks grazing and shepherds watching them. Thinking, at once, that they must be the sheep that had been lost and of which he was in search, he made his way, with all speed, towards them. But he had scarcely gone near enough to count them, when a woman of handsome

presence walked up to him and saluted him kindly. When he had returned her greeting, he asked her what she was called.

"I am called," she said, "Vandrád or Valbjörg, which you please, and am glad to see you here and welcome you, friend Sigurdur."

"Surely I have never seen you before," replied he; "how then do you know my name?"

The woman answered, "I know well both you and your father Andres, and what is more, I know that you are now in search of his missing flocks and herdsmen. To tell you the truth, it was I that both lost your father his sheep and killed his shepherds. And you, since you have been foolhardy enough to wander about on the same errand, shall lose your life in the same way as the others have done, if you will not agree, better than they, to what I ask you."

"What is your will?" said Sigurdur. "Tell me what you wish me to do."

Then she said, "My will is that you stay here and live with me and never try to escape."

"But," replied Sigurdur again, "I must know first to what manner of woman I pledge myself; and if you refuse to tell me I will rather die, for I know not fear, than say you yea."

Upon this she answered, "I am one of the race of elves, and I dwell in yonder hillock."

Then Sigurdur consented to live with her, on condition

that she would, firstly, let him build a house for himself after his own manner; secondly, that she would let his father know that he still lived and did well; and lastly, that she would restore safe and sound his father's flocks. All these things she promised to do, and bade Sigurdur follow her. Pretty well content with the bargain he had made, and not altogether cold to Valbjörg's charms, he followed her till they came to the hillock, into which they entered through a door of carved wood. As Sigurdur was looking round him and admiring the beauty of the rooms and the traces of wealth which they contained, Valbjörg said to him:

"Two years have I lived here quite alone, since I lost my parents, and weary and lonely have I been. And I have been unwilling to dwell with one of my own race, as my father prophesied that I should have children by a human being. Therefore, when the herdsmen came here to look after the lost flocks, I asked them to stay with me and comfort me, and when each refused, I slew him by magic art. But I am well pleased, Sigurdur, that your heart has inclined towards me, as now my father's words will be accomplished."

So Sigurdur built himself a hut close to the hillock, and lived with Valbjörg; and though, at first, he found his new life irksome to him, and his soul yearned for home, yet after a short time he became accustomed to everything about him, and his love for Valbjörg increased.

One morning, when Andres, Sigurdur's father, rose from sleep and looked forth from the farm, he saw the flock of sheep which he had lost grazing in the home-field, and on going to count them, he found that not one was missing. Much rejoiced at this, he thought that Sigurdur, and perhaps the missing shepherds, had come back during the night, and were now in the family room. But no! nothing had either been seen or heard of them, and Andres was constrained to send out twenty of his neighbours to search for them. All in vain, however; for search as they would, far and near, high and low, over hill and through valley, not a trace was to be found of the lost men. When they all came back to the farm with this bad news, the farmer took it so much to heart, that he fell ill and kept to his bed.

It happened one night, some little time after this, that Andres had a dream, in which he saw a woman of handsome presence come to him, who said—

"Fear not, my friend, for your son's life. He is well, and lives happily with me, who am an elfwoman. It was I who stole your sheep, but your son made me restore them."

Upon this she left him, and he woke, full of joy that his son was still alive; and in the morning he rose again, restored to health by these happy tidings, and went about among his servants, attending to the management of the farm, as he had done before the illness smote him.

Three years went by, and still nothing was heard of Sigurdur. In the autumn of the third year, however, the farmer Andres had a dream, in which his son came to him, and after he had saluted him, said:

"Come, my father, I entreat you, on Christmas-eve, to the Lakes of Wool, and bring with you the priest Eiríkur. By the shores of the lakes you will see my house standing, and will find the door thrown open. Come into the house yourself, but bid Eiríkur stand in the entrance and grasp tightly the woman who shall run out from the family-room as if to leave the house. On no account must he let her go, do or say what she will, as on his holding her fast depend my safety and happiness. If she escape him that Christmas-eve, you will never see me more."

With these words he vanished, and Andres woke. After pondering a while over this dream, which he felt to be no idle fancy, but well fraught with meaning, he determined to do as Sigurdur had bidden him, and rising went forthwith to Eiríkur's house to take counsel with him thereupon. When the priest had heard the dream, he said to the farmer:

"My friend, this but confirms what I have always thought, namely, that the elves withhold your son from you, and right willingly will I aid you in this matter, whatever turn it may take."

Accordingly in due time Andres and Eiríkur addressed themselves to their journey, and on Christmas-eve arrived at the shores of the Lakes of Wool. They at once saw

Sigurdur's house, and going up to it found the door thrown open. Then Andres went in, leaving the priest in the doorway, as his son had told him in the dream to do. When he entered the family-room he saw, by the light of a candle that was burning there, his son Sigurdur carding wool upon a wooden chest. Near him was a bed, on which sat a woman with a child in her arms, and another child lying in a cradle before her feet.

So the farmer saluted them, saying, "God be here."

No sooner were the words out of his mouth than the woman, flinging down the child she held in her arms, and leaping over the cradle which lay at her feet, ran hastily from the family-room, and made as if she would leave the house. But Eirîkur, the priest, who stood in the doorway, was too quick for her, and seizing her in his arms, held her fast. And that was no easy matter, for she struggled so that the priest, who had the strength of two men, and who was moreover skilled in wrestling and manly arts, had much ado to resist her. When they heard the noise, Sigurdur and his father went out from the family-room, taking the light with them, and helped the priest to bring her back into the house and lay her down on the bed. After Eirîkur had laid his hand gently upon her she became quieter, and he watched over her all that night. From time to time she fainted, and when she came again to her senses, wept till it made the blood of all who heard her run cold. And she entreated the priest to let her go

free, by all he loved best; but he was not to be moved from his firm though gentle watch and ward. At last, after day had broken, Sigurdur and his father collected all the house-wealth together, packed it on horses, and set forth, taking the priest and Valbjörg and the children with them, and driving the flocks before them. When they had left the hut and the mound a little way behind them, Sigurdur turned round and cast a spell over the place, which is the reason why nobody can find it.

Now the weather being fine and the nights bright and calm, the whole company travelled without resting till they came to Andres' farm, where the priest Eiríkur dwelt with them a week, trying, through much watching and prayer, to tame the savage temper of Valbjörg.

But at the end of that time Sigurdur and his father thought best that he should take the woman to his own house for the remainder of the winter, which he did; and before the spring time, he had quite subdued her elfin nature.

In the meantime Sigurdur took care of his two children at the farm, and his flocks wandered about the hills, taking care of themselves and trusting to kind neighbours.

In the spring Eiríkur joined Sigurdur and Valbjörg in marriage, and a very loving and happy couple they were, now that all Valbjörg's elfin nature had left her. So they dwelt to a good age in the parish of which the worthy Eiríkur was priest, and Valbjörg was much loved and

looked up to, as a Christian woman and a good housewife. Four children they had, whose descendants may no doubt be found in the East of Iceland, by anybody who cares to look for them.

Una the Elfwoman.

A certain man named Geir lived at a farm called Raudafell, and was rich, young, and active, and a widower at the time to which this story refers. Once, in the hay-making season, a large quantity of hay being left for the women to rake up—almost more than they could do, for he kept but few maid-servants—Geir saw a young and fair woman enter the field, and begin raking up the hay with the others. She uttered not a word to anybody, but worked quietly, and so quickly, that, very soon after she arrived, the hay was all got in, till the farmer fancied there must be some magic power in the rake she used. Every evening, when the work was over, she went away, but came on the morrow, and every day through the season, always doing more work than all the rest, and always departing at nightfall without exchanging a syllable with anybody. On the last night of the hay-cutting, however, the farmer went up to her, and thanked her for having worked so diligently all the summer. She received his thanks kindly, and they talked a long time together, the farmer concluding by asking her to come to his house and

act thenceforth as his housekeeper. She consented, and went away.

Next morning she came to Raudafell, bringing with her a large chest, and at once entered upon her duties in the house. The chest was put into one of the outhouses, as she was unwilling, for some reasons of her own, to keep it in the farm itself. She stayed there through the winter, and Geir had every cause to be pleased with her management of the house, for she was clean and thrifty, and an active manager. She never would tell the farmer whence she came, but went so far as to allow that her name was Una: nor would she ever enter the church, though urged to do so over and over again by the farmer; and this was the only cause of offence which he could find in her.

It was the custom on Christmas-eve for every inmate of the farm to go to church except one, who was left behind to take care of the house. On this occasion Una always refused to go with the rest, which much displeased the farmer; she remained at home, and when the family returned from church, had finished all the household work.

Three years passed, during which time Una remained with the farmer, who became so fond of her, that were it not for her one fault—her dislike of going to church—he would have married her.

On Christmas-eve in the third winter Una was, as usual, while the others went to service, left alone in the house. When the family had gone some little distance

from home on their way to church, one of the men-servants declared himself unwell, and, sitting on a stone, said that he would remain there till the illness passed over, and that he did not wish anyone to remain behind with him. The farmer, therefore, and the rest of the family left him there, and went on to the church.

When they were out of sight, the man got up and went back to the farm—for his illness was only feigned in order to enable him to play the spy upon Una. On arriving there he saw that Una was sweeping and washing the whole house, and seemed in great haste to finish her work. He hid himself so that Una should not know of his return, and, when she had finished her work, saw her leave the house. He followed her, and saw her go to the outhouse and unlock her chest, from which she took out handsome and cunningly-embroidered clothes, and, having dressed herself in them, she looked so lovely, that the man-servant thought he had never seen anybody so beautiful before. Then she took out of the chest a red cloth, which she put under her arm, and, locking the box, left the outhouse, and closed the door behind her. She ran across the meadow near the farm till she came to a soft slough, upon the surface of which she spread the scarlet cloth, and stepped into the centre of it, just leaving room by chance at one of the corners for the man-servant, who (having by magical arts, in which he was well skilled, made himself quite invisible) stepped on to the cloth after her.

No sooner was he there than the cloth sank with them through the earth, which seemed like smoke round them, until they came to some wide and fair green fields, where Una stepped off the cloth and put it again under her arm. Some little way off stood a vast and stately palace, into which Una went, and the man after her. Here he found a great number of people assembled, who rose at her entrance, and received her with every show of love and respect. The whole hall in which they stood was adorned as if for a feast. When they had greeted Una they all sat down again, Una amongst them, and the most costly dainties, and rarest wines in gold and silver vessels, were set before them.

But as for our invisible friend, the man-servant, all he could get hold of was a rib-bone of smoked mutton, wonderfully fat and good, which he, without tasting, thrust into his pocket.

When the supper was over, the guests amused themselves with drinking and various games, and kept up the revel all night with a great show of joy. About daybreak Una rose and declared that she must now depart, as the farmer, her master, and his family would by this time be leaving church. Then bidding a courteous farewell to all, she went out again into the fair green fields, where she spread the cloth out once more, and stepped upon it, and the man-servant on to the corner, as before. The cloth rose with them through the earth, till they

arrived at the slough, whence they had started. And now, gathering up the cloth under her arm, Una ran into the outhouse, where she locked it, together with her handsome clothes in the chest, and again donning her every-day apparel, went back to the farmer's house. Pretty well content with having seen all this, the man-servant took his visible form, and hastened back to the stone, where he had feigned illness the evening before. On their way homewards from church, the farmer and his family found him; and inquiring how he was, received for answer that he had passed a wretched night, but was much better, and was now able to return home with them, which he did.

When they were all assembled at breakfast, and were eating, the farmer (suspecting nothing) took up a rib-bone of mutton from his plate, and holding it up, said:

"Did any of you ever see so fat a rib-bone as this?"

"Possibly, my master," replied the man-servant; and taking from his pocket the rib-bone of mutton he had stolen from the elfin-feast, held it up.

Directly she saw it, Una changed colour, and without a word vanished from their sight: nor was she ever seen afterwards. So the man told the farmer all that he had seen in the night, and Geir no longer wondered why Una should avoid going to church.

Hildur, the Queen of the Elves.

Once, in a mountainous district, there lived a certain farmer, whose name and that of his farm have not been handed down to us; so we cannot tell them. He was unmarried, and had a housekeeper named Hildur, concerning whose family and descent he knew nothing whatever. She had all the indoor affairs of the farm under her charge, and managed them wondrous well. All the inmates of the house, the farmer himself to boot, were fond of her, as she was clean and thrifty in her habits, and kind and gentle in speech.

Everything about the place flourished exceedingly, but the farmer always found the greatest difficulty in hiring a herdsman; a very important matter, as the well-being of the farm depended not a little on the care taken of the sheep. This difficulty did not arise from any fault of the farmer's own, or from neglect on the part of the housekeeper to the comforts of the servants, but from the fact, that no herdsman who entered his service lived more than a year, each one being without fail found dead in his bed, on the morning of Christmas-day. No wonder, therefore, the farmer found herdsmen scarce.

In those times it was the custom of the country to spend the night of Christmas-eve at church, and this occasion for service was looked upon as a very solemn one.

But so far was this farm from the church, that the herdsmen, who did not return from their flocks till late in the evening, were unable to go to it on that night until long after the usual time; and as for Hildur, she always remained behind to take care of the house, and always had so much to do in the way of cleaning the rooms and dealing out the rations for the servants, that the family used to come home from church and go to bed long before she had finished her work, and was able to go to bed herself.

The more the reports of the death of herdsman after herdsman, on the night of Christmas-eve, were spread abroad, the greater became the difficulty the farmer found in hiring one, although it was never supposed for an instant that violence was used towards the men, as no mark had ever been found on their bodies; and as, moreover, there was no one to suspect. At length the farmer declared that his conscience would no longer let him thus hire men only in order that they might die, so he determined in future to let luck take care of his sheep, or the sheep take care of themselves.

Not long after he had made this determination, a bold and hardy-looking man came to him and made him a proffer of his services. The farmer said:

"My good friend, I am not in so great need of your services as to hire you."

Then the man asked him, "Have you, then, taken a herdsman for this winter?"

The farmer said, "No; for I suppose you know what a terrible fate has hitherto befallen every one I have hired."

"I have heard of it," said the other, "but the fear of it shall neither trouble me nor prevent my keeping your sheep this winter for you, if you will but make up your mind to take me."

But the farmer would not hear of it at first; "For," said he, "it is a pity, indeed, that so fine a fellow as you should lose your chance of life. Begone, if you are wise, and get work elsewhere."

Yet still the man declared, again and again, that he cared not a whit for the terrors of Christmas-eve, and still urged the farmer to hire him.

At length the farmer consented, in answer to the man's urgent prayer, to take him as herdsman; and very well they agreed together. For everyone, both high and low, liked the man, as he was honest and open, zealous in everything he laid his hands to, and willing to do anyone a good turn, if need were.

On Christmas-eve, towards nightfall, the farmer and all his family went (as has been before declared to be the custom) to church, except Hildur, who remained behind to look after household matters, and the herdsman, who could not leave his sheep in time. Late in the evening, the latter as usual returned home, and after having eaten his supper, went to bed. As soon as he was well between the sheets, the remembrance struck him of what had be-

fallen all the former herdsmen in his position on the same evening, and he thought it would be the best plan for him to lie awake and thus to be ready for any accident, though he was mighty little troubled with fear. Quite late at night, he heard the farmer and his family return from church, enter the house, and having taken supper, go to bed. Still, nothing happened, except that whenever he closed his eyes for a moment, a strange and deadly faintness stole over him, which only acted as one reason the more for his doing his best to keep awake.

Shortly after he had become aware of these feelings, he heard some one creep stealthily up to the side of his bed, and looking through the gloom at the figure, fancied he recognized Hildur the housekeeper. So he feigned to be fast asleep, and felt her place something in his mouth, which he knew instantly to be the bit of a magic bridle, but yet allowed her to fix it on him, without moving. When she had fastened the bridle, she dragged him from his bed with it, and out of the farmhouse, without his being either able or willing to make the least resistance. Then mounting on his back, she made him rise from the ground as if on wings, and rode him through the air, till they arrived at a huge and awful precipice, which yawned, like a great well, down into the earth.

She dismounted at a large stone, and fastening the reins to it, leaped into the precipice. But the herdsman, objecting strongly to being tied to this stone all night, and

thinking to himself that it would be no bad thing to know what became of the woman, tried to escape, bridle and all, from the stone. This he found, however, to be impossible, for as long as the bit was in his mouth, he was quite powerless to get away. So he managed, after a short struggle, to get the bridle off his head, and having so done, leapt into the precipice, down which he had seen Hildur disappear. After sinking for a long, long time, he caught a glimpse of Hildur beneath him, and at last they came to some beautiful green meadows.

From all this, the man guessed that Hildur was by no means a common mortal, as she had before made believe to be, and feared if he were to follow her along these green fields, and she turn round and catch sight of him, he might, not unlikely, pay for his curiosity with his life. So he took a magic stone which he always carried about him, the nature of which was to make him invisible when he held it in his palm, and placing it in the hollow of his hand, ran after her with all his strength.

When they had gone some way along the meadows, a splendid palace rose before them, with the way to which Hildur seemed perfectly well acquainted. At her approach a great crowd of people came forth from the doors, and saluted Hildur with respect and joy. Foremost of these walked a man of kingly and noble aspect, whose salutation seemed to be that of a lover or a husband: all the rest bowed to her as if she were their queen. This man was

accompanied by two children, who ran up to Hildur, calling her mother, and embraced her. After the people had welcomed their queen, they all returned to the palace, where they dressed her in royal robes, and loaded her hands with costly rings and bracelets.

The herdsman followed the crowd, and posted himself where he would be least in the way of the company, but where he could catch sight easily of all that passed, and lose nothing. So gorgeous and dazzling were the hangings of the hall, and the silver and golden vessels on the table, that he thought he had never, in all his life before, seen the like; not to mention the wonderful dishes and wines which seemed plentiful there, and which, only by the look of them, filled his mouth with water, while he would much rather have filled it with something else.

After he had waited a little time, Hildur appeared in the hall, and all the assembled guests were begged to take their seats, while Hildur sat on her throne beside the king; after which all the people of the court ranged themselves on each side of the royal couple, and the feast commenced.

When it was concluded, the various guests amused themselves, some by dancing, some by singing, others by drinking and revel; but the king and queen talked together, and seemed to the herdsman to be very sad.

While they were thus conversing, three children, younger than those the man had seen before, ran in, and

clung round the neck of their mother. Hildur received them with all a mother's love, and, as the youngest was restless, put it on the ground and gave it one of her rings to play with.

After the little one had played a while with the ring he lost it, and it rolled along the floor towards the herdsman, who, being invisible, picked it up without being perceived, and put it carefully into hisc poket. Of course all search for it by the guests was in vain.

When the night was far advanced, Hildur made preparations for departure, at which all the people assembled showed great sorrow, and begged her to remain longer.

The herdsman had observed, that in one corner of the hall sat an old and ugly woman, who had neither received the queen with joy nor pressed her to stay longer.

As soon as the king perceived that Hildur addressed herself to her journey, and that neither his entreaties nor those of the assembly could induce her to stay, he went up to the old woman, and said to her:

"Mother, rid us now of thy curse; cause no longer my queen to live apart and afar from me. Surely her short and rare visits are more pain to me than joy."

The old woman answered him with a wrathful face.

"Never will I depart from what I have said. My words shall hold true in all their force, and on no condition will I abolish my curse."

On this the king turned from her, and going up to his

wife, entreated her in the fondest and most loving terms not to depart from him.

The queen answered, "The infernal power of thy mother's curse forces me to go, and perchance this may be the last time that I shall see thee. For lying, as I do, under this horrible ban, it is not possible that my constant murders can remain much longer secret, and then I must suffer the full penalty of crimes which I have committed against my will."

While she was thus speaking the herdsman sped from the palace and across the fields to the precipice, up which he mounted as rapidly as he had come down, thanks to the magic stone.

When he arrived at the rock he put the stone into his pocket, and the bridle over his head again, and awaited the coming of the elf-queen. He had not long to wait, for very soon afterwards Hildur came up through the abyss, and mounted on his back, and off they flew again to the farmhouse, where Hildur, taking the bridle from his head, placed him again in his bed, and retired to her own. The herdsman, who by this time was well tired out, now considered it safe to go to sleep, which he did, so soundly as not to wake till quite late on Christmas-morning.

Early that same day the farmer rose, agitated and filled with the fear that, instead of passing Christmas in joy, he should assuredly, as he so often had before, find his herds-

man dead, and pass it in sorrow and mourning. So he and all the rest of the family went to the bedside of the herdsman.

When the farmer had looked at him and found him breathing, he praised God aloud for his mercy in preserving the man from death.

Not long afterwards the man himself awoke and got up.

Wondering at his strange preservation the farmer asked him how he had passed the night, and whether he had seen or heard anything.

The man replied, "No; but I have had a very curious dream."

"What was it?" asked the farmer.

Upon which the man related everything that had passed in the night, circumstance for circumstance, and word for word, as well as he could remember. When he had finished his story every one was silent for wonder, except Hildur, who went up to him and said:

"I declare you to be a liar in all that you have said, unless you can prove it by sure evidence."

Not in the least abashed, the herdsman took from his pocket the ring which he had picked up on the floor of the hall in Elf-land, and showing it to her said:

"Though my dream needs no proof, yet here is one you will not doubtless deem other than a sure one; for is not this your gold ring, Queen Hildur?"

Hildur answered, "It is, no doubt, my ring. Happy

man! may you prosper in all you undertake, for you have released me from the awful yoke which my mother-in-law laid, in her wrath, upon me, and from the curse of a yearly murder."

And then Hildur told them the story of her life as follows:—

"I was born of an obscure family among the elves. Our king fell in love with me and married me, in spite of the strong disapproval of his mother. She swore eternal hatred to me in her anger against her son, and said to him, 'Short shall be your joy with this fair wife of yours, for you shall see her but once a year, and that only at the expense of a murder. This is my curse upon her, and it shall be carried out to the letter. She shall go and serve in the upper world, this queen, and every Christmas-eve shall ride a man, one of her fellow-servants, with this magic bridle, to the confines of Elf-land, where she shall pass a few hours with you, and then ride him back again till his very heart breaks with toil, and his very life leaves him. Let her thus enjoy her queenship.'

"And this horrible fate was to cling to me until I should either have these murders brought home to me, and be condemned to death, or should meet with a gallant man, like this herdsman, who should have nerve and courage to follow me down into Elf-land, and be able to prove afterwards that he had been there with me, and seen the customs of my people. And now I must confess that all the

former herdsmen were slain by me, but no penalty shall touch me for their murders, as I committed them against my will. And as for you, O courageous man, who have dared; the first of human beings, to explore the realms of Elf-land, and have freed me from the yoke of this awful curse, I will reward you in times to come, but not now.

"A deep longing for my home and my loved ones impels me hence. Farewell!"

With these words Hildur vanished from the sight of the astonished people, and was never seen again.

But our friend the herdsman, leaving the service of the farmer, built a farm for himself, and prospered, and became one of the chief men in the country, and always ascribed, with grateful thanks, his prosperity to Hildur, Queen of the Elves.

The Man-servant and the Water-elves.

In a large house, where all the chief rooms were panelled, there lived, once upon a time, a farmer, whose ill fate it was that every servant of his that was left alone to guard the house on the night of Christmas-eve, while the rest of the family went to church, was found dead when the family returned home. As soon as the report of this was spread abroad, the farmer had the greatest difficulty in procuring servants who would consent to watch alone in the house on that

night; until at last one day a man, a strong fellow, offered him his services to sit up alone and guard the house. The farmer told him what fate awaited him for his rashness, but the man despised such a fear, and persisted in his determination.

On Christmas-eve, when the farmer and all his family, except the new man-servant, were preparing for church, the farmer said to him:

"Come with us to church; I cannot leave you here to die."

But the other replied, "I intend to stay here, for it would be unwise in you to leave your house unprotected; and, besides, the cattle and sheep must have their food at the proper time."

"Never mind the beasts," answered the farmer. "Do not be so rash as to remain in the house this night, for whenever we have returned from church on this night, we have always found every living thing in the house dead, with all its bones broken."

But the man was not to be persuaded, as he considered all these fears beneath his notice; so the farmer and the rest of the servants went away and left him behind, alone in the house.

As soon as he was by himself, he began to consider how to guard against anything that might occur, for a dread had stolen over him, in spite of his courage, that something strange was about to take place. At last he thought that

the best thing to do was, first of all to light up the family room, and then to find some place in which to hide himself. As soon as he had lighted all the candles, he moved two planks out of the wainscot at the end of the room, and, creeping into the space between it and the wall, restored the planks to their places, so that he could see plainly into the room, and yet avoid being himself discovered.

He had scarcely finished concealing himself, when two fierce and strange-looking men entered the room and began looking about.

One of them said, "I smell a human being."

"No," replied the other, "there is no human being here."

Then they took a candle and continued their search, until they found the man's dog asleep under one of the beds. They took it up, and, having dashed it on the ground till every bone in its body was broken, hurled it from them. When the man-servant saw this, he congratulated himself on not having fallen into their hands.

Suddenly the room was filled with people, who were laden with tables and all kinds of table furniture, silver, cloths, and all, which they spread out, and having done so, sat down to a rich supper, which they had also brought with them. They feasted noisily, and spent the remainder of the night in drinking and dancing. Two of them were appointed to keep guard, in order to give the company due warning of the approach either of anybody, or of the

day. Three times they went out, always returning with the news that they saw neither the approach of any human being, nor yet the break of day.

But when the man-servant suspected the night to be pretty far spent, he jumped from his place of concealment into the room, and clashing the two planks together with as much noise as he could make, shouted like a madman:

"The day! the day! the day!"

On these words the whole company rose scared from their seats, and rushed headlong out, leaving behind them not only their tables and all the silver dishes, but even the very clothes they had taken off for ease in dancing. In the hurry of flight many were wounded and trodden under foot, while the rest ran into the darkness, the man-servant after them, clapping the planks together, and shrieking, "The day! the day! the day!" until they came to a large lake, into which the whole party plunged headlong and disappeared.

From this, the man knew them to be water-elves.

Then he returned home, gathered the corpses of the elves who had been killed in the flight, killed the wounded ones, and making a great heap of them all, burned them. When he had finished this task, he cleaned up the house and took possession of all the treasures the elves had left behind them.

On the farmer's return, his servant told him all that had occurred, and showed him the spoils. The farmer praised

him for a brave fellow, and congratulated him on having escaped with his life. The man gave him half the treasures of the elves, and ever afterwards prospered exceedingly.

This was the last visit the water-elves ever paid to *that* house.

The Crossways.

It is supposed that among the hills there are certain cross-roads from the centre of which you can see four churches, one at the end of each road.

If you sit at the crossing of these roads, on Christmas-eve (or as others say, on New Year's-eve), elves come from every direction and cluster round you, and ask you, with all sorts of blandishments and fair promises, to go with them; but you must continue silent. Then they bring to you rarities and delicacies of every description, gold, silver, and precious stones, meats and wines, of which they beg you to accept; but you must neither move a limb nor accept a single thing they offer you. If you get so far as this without speaking, elfwomen come to you in the likeness of your mother, your sister, or any other relation, and beg you to come with them, using every art and entreaty; but beware you neither move nor speak. And if you can continue to keep silent and motionless

all the night, until you see the first streak of dawn, then start up, and cry aloud:

"Praise be to God! His daylight filleth the heavens!"

As soon as you have said this, the elves will leave you, and with you, all the wealth they have used to entice you, which will now be yours.

But should you either answer, or accept of their offers, you will from that moment become mad.

On the night of one Christmas-eve, a man named Fusi was out on the cross-roads, and managed to resist all the entreaties and proffers of the elves, until one of them offered him a large lump of mutton-suet, and begged him to take a bite of it. Fusi, who had up to this time gallantly resisted all such offers as gold and silver and diamonds, and such filthy lucre, could hold out no longer, and crying, "Seldom have I refused a bite of mutton-suet," he went mad.

STORIES OF WATER-MONSTERS.

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THE MERMAN.

LONG ago a farmer lived at Vogar, who was a mighty fisherman, and, of all the farms round about, not one was so well situated with regard to the fisheries as his.

One day, according to custom, he had gone out fishing, and having cast down his line from the boat, and waited awhile, found it very hard to pull up again, as if there were something very heavy at the end of it. Imagine his astonishment when he found that what he had caught was a great fish, with a man's head and body! When he saw that this creature was alive, he addressed it and said, "Who and whence are you?"

"A merman from the bottom of the sea," was the reply.

The farmer then asked him what he had been doing when the hook caught his flesh.

The other replied, "I was turning the cowl of my mother's chimney-pot, to suit it to the wind. So let me go again, will you?"

"Not for the present," said the fisherman. "You shall serve me awhile first."

So without more words he dragged him into the boat and rowed to shore with him.

When they got to the boat-house, the fisherman's dog came to him and greeted him joyfully, barking and fawning on him, and wagging his tail. But his master's temper being none of the best, he struck the poor animal; whereupon the merman laughed for the first time.

Having fastened the boat, he went towards his house, dragging his prize with him, over the fields, and stumbling over a hillock, which lay in his way, cursed it heartily; whereupon the merman laughed for the second time.

When the fisherman arrived at the farm, his wife came out to receive him, and embraced him affectionately, and he received her salutations with pleasure; whereupon the merman laughed for the third time.

Then said the farmer to the merman, "You have laughed three times, and I am curious to know *why* you have laughed. Tell me, therefore."

"Never will I tell you," replied the merman, "unless you promise to take me to the same place in the sea wherefrom you caught me, and there to let me go free again." So the farmer made him the promise.

"Well," said the merman, "I laughed the first time because you struck your dog, whose joy at meeting you was real and sincere. The second time, because you cursed the mound over which you stumbled, which is full of golden ducats. And the third time, because you received with pleasure your wife's empty and flattering embrace, who is faithless to you, and a hypocrite. And now be an honest man and take me out to the sea whence you have brought me."

The farmer replied: "Two things that you have told me I have no means of proving, namely, the faithfulness of my dog and the faithlessness of my wife. But the third I will try the truth of, and if the hillock contain gold, then I will believe the rest."

Accordingly he went to the hillock, and having dug it up, found therein a great treasure of golden ducats, as the merman had told him. After this the farmer took the merman down to the boat, and to that place in the sea whence he had caught him. Before he put him in, the latter said to him:

"Farmer, you have been an honest man, and I will reward you for restoring me to my mother, if only you have skill enough to take possession of pro-

perty that I shall throw in your way. Be happy and prosper."

Then the farmer put the merman into the sea, and he sank out of sight.

It happened that not long after, seven sea-grey cows were seen on the beach, close to the farmer's land. These cows appeared to be very unruly, and ran away directly the farmer approached them. So he took a stick and ran after them, possessed with the fancy that if he could burst the bladder which he saw on the nose of each of them, they would belong to him. He contrived to hit out the bladder on the nose of one cow, which then became so tame that he could easily catch it, while the others leaped into the sea and disappeared. The farmer was convinced that this was the gift of the merman. And a very useful gift it was, for better cow was never seen nor milked in all the land, and she was the mother of the race of grey cows so much esteemed now.

And the farmer prospered exceedingly, but never caught any more mermen. As for his wife, nothing further is told about her, so we can repeat nothing.

Nennir, or the One who Feels Inclined.

There was once a girl who had been charged by her master to look after some ewes which were lost. She had

gone a long way after them, until she was quite tired, when suddenly she saw before her a grey horse. Much delighted at this, she went up to it and bound her garter into its mouth for a bridle, but just as she was going to mount she said, "I feel afraid, I am half-inclined not to mount this horse." As soon as the animal heard these words it leaped into some water that stood near, and disappeared.

Then the girl saw that this was a river-horse.

Now the nature of this animal is that it cannot bear to hear its own name "Nennir, or the one who feels inclined," which is the reason why it jumped into the water when the girl said, "I feel afraid, I am half-inclined not to mount this horse."

The same is the effect on the river-horse if it hears the name of the devil.

Listen to another story.

Three children were playing together on the shingly bank of a river, when they saw a grey horse standing near them and went up to it to look at it. One of the children mounted on its back and after him another, to have a ride for pleasure, and only the eldest one was left. They asked him to follow, "for," they said, "the horse's back is surely long enough for all three of us."

But the child refused, and said, "I do not feel inclined." No sooner were the words out of his mouth, than the horse leaped into the river with the two other children, who

were both drowned, while only the eldest survived to tell us this story of Nennir the grey river-horse.

The Lake-monster.

In the last century a man lived in the north country, called Kolbeinn, who was very poor. But everybody liked him for his good heart, and treated him with kindness.

Once, on the day before Christmas-eve, late at night, he went over the lake of Vesturhóp, which was frozen, to beg some food for the next day, from one of the farmers on the other side. The farmer gave him a smoked carcase of mutton, with which Kolbeinn returned joyfully homewards.

When he was about the middle of the lake, he heard a noise behind him, and turning round saw the ice crack and a monster rise from it, having eight feet, and looking like two horses joined by their tails, with their heads facing opposite ways. This monster ran after Kolbeinn, who saw no chance of escape, so he dropped the carcase of mutton and took to his heels with all the speed he could muster.

Next morning he went out again on to the ice to see how much might be left of his mutton, but only found a few chewed bones. He took some of his neighbours to look at these bones, and they pitied him so much that they soon made up his loss to him.

"Turning round, he saw the ice crack and a monster rise from it, having eight feet, and looking like two horses."

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Naddi.

In ancient times there was a main road from Njardvík, to Borgar-fjördur, which passed over a very steep mountain, sloping down to the sea. But this road became unfrequented because a monster, half-man, half-beast, took up his abode upon it, and after nightfall used to destroy so many travellers that the way was at length considered impassable. This creature hid itself in a rocky gulf on the sea-side of the mountains, which has since been called the gulf of Naddi. This name arose from the fact that as people passed, a strange rattling was heard among the stones at the bottom.

It happened once, in autumn, that a certain man stopped at a farm in the neighbourhood, who intended late in the evening to cross this part of the mountain, and was not to be dissuaded from his determination by the entreaties of the farmer and his family. So he started off with the words "as long as I fear nothing, nothing can harm me."

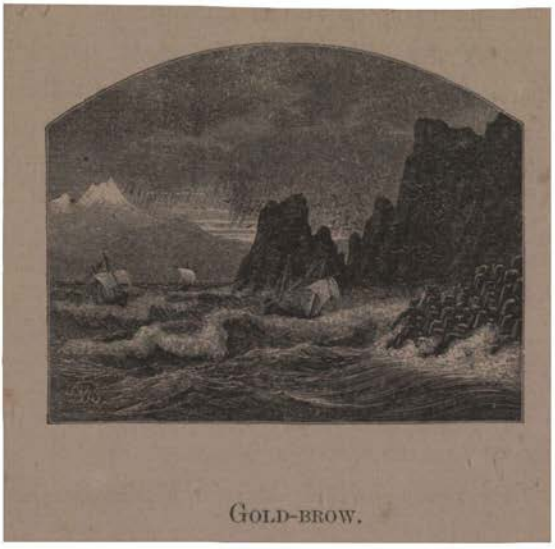
When he came to the gulf he met with the monster, and at once attacked it, and they had a long and fearful struggle together. In their fight they came together to the verge of a precipice which has been since called Krossjadar. Over this the man hurled the monster. Afterwards upon this very spot was raised a cross, with this inscription:—

"Effigiem Christi, qui prodis, pronus honora."

The man came to Njardvík, black and blue with his struggle, and, after having kept his bed for a month, recovered.

Never was this fearful sea-monster seen after it had been vanquished by a human being. The man soon forgot his bruises in the glory of having rid his country of such a plague.

STORIES OF TROLLS.



GOLD-BROW.

LONG ago, a certain woman named Audur the wealthy lived at a farm called Hvammur, in the west country. The farm stood on the bank of a river, on the opposite side of which were rich corn-fields. But Audur had forbidden any seed to be sown on a particular spot where the land happened to be best, nor did she allow her servants to graze any cattle there, and if by chance any cows had been there, she forbade them to be milked the next day.

Once it happened that when Audur was very old, a young and handsome woman came to Hvammur, who declared her name to be Gold-brow, but nobody knew

either whence she came or who she was. The only person she could find to speak to was the superintendent, but Audur herself she did not see. The woman asked him why a particular spot in the field was not sown with corn, nor grazed, and the superintendent answered that Audur had forbidden it to be so. At this Gold-brow laughed heartily, and asked him to sell her the ground.

"For," she said, "I will give more for a single hillock of that land than for all the great farm of Hvammur. I have a certain foreboding that on that ground a custom will be introduced, and that sort of house built, of which I have the greatest dread and dislike. Sell me, therefore, the spot of ground without asking Audur about it."

With these words she took out a large purse filled with coin.

When the manager saw the glitter of her gold he said to himself, "Audur is old and has but little to do with the management;" and forthwith sold the land to Gold-brow.

But when Audur came to know what had been done, she was exceedingly wroth, and sent her manager away, saying to him, "You will never fatten on this gold. I suspect the woman who paid it to you to be the most evil of witches, and knew long ago what would happen to that ground. No harm, however, can come home to Hvammur, for a good spirit watches over it." Then the steward thought that he would pacify the old lady by

giving her some of the contents of the purse he had just received. So he undid the strings, and lo! instead of gold out poured from it a heap of worms which smelt so horrible that the man forthwith went mad and died. After this the man and his purse were buried in a little hollow of that spot of ground which Gold-brow had purchased, which is called to this day "worm-hollow."

Audur did not endeavour to reclaim from Gold-brow the ground which she had bought, but destroyed all the corn-fields round it from the sea to a rocky river-gulf in one direction, and from the mountain to the river in the other. She also set up three crosses where the gulf joined the mountain (whence its name Cross-gulf), and said, "During my life Gold-brow shall never cross this boundary." And this came true, for during the life of Audur, Gold-brow neither brought her sheep and cattle to graze anywhere near the crops nor approached them herself. Now Gold-brow built on her piece of ground a farm and a large temple, where she made great offerings, and performed all sorts of witchcraft. It is told as a curious thing, that whenever she was using her incantations, and happened to look either towards Hvammur, or the crosses by the mountains, all her spells went wrong, which she declared was because at each of these points she always saw a light, whose rays were so dazzling as to make her forget at once all her magic words and signs.

Audur, who was a Christian, died shortly after all this

and was buried in some ground which she had caused, in her lifetime, to be consecrated, by the sea, not far from the land belonging to Gold-brow, who found herself now in a sort of prison, what with the sacred remains of Audur on one side and the crosses on the other. So she sold her piece of ground to the heathen successor of Audur, at Hvammur, and purchased another in a dark and dismal valley, over which the sun seldom shone in summer and never in winter, and in the darkest and gloomiest recess intended to take up her abode. But when it came to passing out of her old property to go to her new one, by the road which led near the crosses, she found herself nearly powerless, and going into her temple was compelled to use the strongest charms to strengthen herself; and then ordering her servants to bind her eyes so that she should not see, she took from the temple a large chest of gold, on to which she had fastened a ring from the temple-door, mounted her horse, holding the chest in front of her, and caused the horse to be led quickly along the path. She particularly commanded her servants to avoid looking toward the crosses. But when they came to the Cross-gulf, one of them looked in the forbidden direction, and, being frightened, caused the horse to stumble, so that the chest of gold burst away from its ring and fell to the ground. Gold-brow being astonished at this, tore the bandage from her eyes, and looked to see what had become of it, but in so doing happened to see the

"In the gulf she pointed out, there was a vast waterfall, and under the waterfall a cave, and the water at the foot of the fall was very deep and its eddying awful."

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crosses not far off. At this she shrieked aloud, and declaring that their brightness was greater than she could bear, bade her servants hurry on as quickly as possible, and bring the chest after her. Then looking at her hand she saw the ring from which the box had fallen, and flung it away in a rage, saying, "All my life will I repent of having brought you with me. Different, indeed, to the purpose for which I intended you, and most hateful to me will be the use to which you will be put."

As soon as she had passed the gulf, a fierce and burning pain seized her eyes, so that before she had reached her new abode she was perfectly blind. In this gloomy valley she lived no long time, suffering perpetual tortures till she died.

On her death-bed, she told her servants to bury her in a deep and precipitous gulf, where neither was the sun ever seen, nor church-bells ever heard. In the gulf she pointed out, there was a vast waterfall, and under the waterfall a cave, and the water at the foot of the fall was very deep and its eddying awful. To this cave Gold-brow was carried, and in it buried, with her head upon the chest of gold. Long afterwards her ghost haunted all the mountains round, so that neither man nor beast was safe after twilight, and much mischief was done.

At this time a farmer lived at Hvammur, named Skeggi, who was a heathen, and addicted to witchcraft. This man suffered much from the persecutions of the goblin

Gold-brow, who killed his herdsmen and his sheep for him one after the other. Skeggi became more wroth with her every day, and in proportion to his anger increased his desire to become possessed of her golden treasures under the waterfall, for he considered that her gold would be of infinitely more use to a living man than to a dead witch. With this idea in his head, he one day started off for the waterfall; but so long was the way that it was evening before he arrived there. He commanded his two servants whom he had brought with him, to let him down into the gulf with a rope. They did so, and he disappeared into the cave under the waterfall. The two men who held the end of the rope, heard, after a little while, the sound of heavy blows and loud shrieks beneath the water, and it was plain that some fearful struggle was going on there. At last they became so horrified as to be on the point of taking flight, when Skeggi gave them the sign to pull up the rope. When they did so they found the chest full of gold fastened to the end of it. They had scarcely pulled it up to the edge of the gulf before they saw the whole valley filled with a strange and spectral fire, whose flames flared higher than the very mountains, and letting go of the rope in their fright, took to their heels, while the chest fell down again into the abyss.

Skeggi came home some time afterwards very weary, and covered with bruises and blood, but bringing on one of his arms, a kettle full of gold which he had managed to

take out of the chest of Gold-brow, and climb with up the rope. But though he had fought hard with the ghost of the troll, he had been unable to subdue her, and she became now more dangerous than ever, killing his sheep and his herdsmen, till at last he could get no servants at all. Skeggi from this time became a changed man, and was so affected by the constant loss of his servants, that he fell ill and took, for a long while, to his bed.

At last one day, after his recovery, being without any herdsman, he went out himself as if to watch the flocks. But he did not return either that night or the next. On the third day, however, he came back, more dead than alive, bearing on his back Gold-brow's treasure-chest.

He said, "You will not see much more either of the troll or of me."

And after these words took to his bed, whence he never rose again.

Before he died, he ordered that the gold contained in the kettle should be expended in timber for building a church at Hvammur.

"For," he continued, "the first time I went to the waterfall and struggled with the ghost of Gold-brow, I called upon Thor to aid me, but he deceived me and played me false. The last time I fought with her, in my despair and anguish I called upon Christ the God of the Christians to aid me, promising to build a church to him. Suddenly a bright gleam of light struck full into the eyes

of the phantom-troll, and she became a stone in the midst of the gulf."

But in spite of all this, Skeggi died a heathen, and refused to be buried in the consecrated ground of the church which he had commanded to be built. So they buried him in the open country, and under his head placed the chest of Gold-brow.

Whether he slept more calmly upon this pillow than the troll had done, this tale saith not.

The Troll of Mjóifjördur.

In the east of Iceland, a bay runs into the land between two steep mountains, which is called Mjóifjördur. In one of the mountains is a deep rocky gulf called Mjóafjardargil. This gulf was inhabited by a troll, who used to draw into her power by magic spells the priests living at the farm Fjördur. She was wont, while the priest was preaching, to lay one of her hands upon the window over the pulpit in church. As soon as the strange hand prevented the light from falling on the paper on which the sermon was written, the priests became mad, and used to cry out to their congregation :

" Take my bowels out, for I must be off to the gulf, to the gulf of Mjóifjördur."

With these words the priests disappeared from the church in the direction of the gulf, and were never heard of again.

A traveller, happening to pass the gulf, once saw the troll sitting on a ledge of rock, kicking her heels and holding something in her hand.

He said to her, "Well, old hag, what have you got there?"

"Oh," replied the other, "I am gnawing the last piece of the skull of Snjóki, your late priest."

After this, no priest would take the charge of the church, until one intrepid man declared that he would do so in spite of the troll and all her tricks. The first time he had to perform service in his new church, he told the boldest of his parishioners to look out for his changing his demeanour in the pulpit, and then to act as follows:—

"Six of you," said he, "must run and catch hold of me, and not let me go, however much I struggle; other six of you shall ring the bells as loud as you can; and ten more of you shall run to the door and place your backs against it."

Shortly after the priest had mounted the pulpit, the hand of the troll was seen moving backwards and forwards outside the window, and at the same moment the priest went mad and said:

"Out with my bowels, out with my bowels, and I must away to the gulf, to the gulf of Mjóifjördur."

With these words he endeavoured to rush out of the church.

But the six men, whom he had previously selected,

seized him and held him back; six others rang the bells with all their might; and the remaining ten ran to the door and set their backs against it. When the troll heard the bells ring, she took to her heels and jumped from the church on to the wall of the churchyard. When she touched this her foot slipped back, and she cried:

"May you never stand again."

From the churchyard she ran to the gulf, and was never more seen.

But the gap in the churchyard wall which her foot had made, could never be mended perfectly, however well the workmen worked, and however good the materials.

The troll's iron shoe, which had tumbled off, was found there, and used by a farmer for an ash-scuttle.

Troll's Stone.

In the neighbourhood of Kirkjubœr, in Hróarstúnga, stand some curious rocks under which is a cave. In this cave, ages ago, dwelt a troll named Thórir, with his wife. Every year, these trolls contrived to entice into their clutches, by magic arts, either the priest or the herdsmen, from Kirkjubœr, and thus matters went on until a priest arrived at the place, named Eirík̃ur, a spiritual man, who was able by his prayers to protect both himself and his herdsmen from the magic spells of this worthy couple.

One Christmas-eve, the female troll had tried her incantations quite in vain, and went to her husband, saying, "I have tried my utmost to entice the priest or the herdsman, but to no purpose, for, as soon as ever I begin my spells, a hot wind blows upon me which forces me by the scorching heat to desist, as if it would consume all my joints. So you must go and procure something for our Christmas dinner, as we have nothing left to eat in the cave."

The giant expressed great unwillingness to trouble himself, being rather lazy, but was at length compelled to go, by the entreaties of his wife, and accordingly marched off to a lake in the neighbourhood which since was called by his name. There he broke a hole through the ice, and lying down on his face, cast in a line and caught trout. When he thought he had caught enough for the Christmas dinner, he wanted to get up again, in order to take them home; but the frost had been so hard while he was intent upon his fishing that it had frozen him tight to the ice, so that he could not rise from it. He struggled desperately to escape, but in vain, and the frost seized upon his heart and killed him where he lay.

The female troll finding her husband rather long in returning, and becoming very hungry, sallied out in search of him, and discovered him lying dead upon the ice. She ran to him and tried to tear his body up from the ice, but failing in this, seized the string of trout, and placing it over her shoulder started off.

Before she went, she said, "A curse on thee, thou wicked lake! Never shall a living fish be caught in thee again."

Which words have indeed proved fatal to the fishery, for the lake since then has never yielded a single fish.

Then she went back homewards with great strides. As she came, however, to the edge of the neighbouring hill, she saw the day-break in the east, and heard from the south the sound of the Kirkjubœr church-bells (two things, which, as everyone knows, are fatal to trolls), upon which she was instantly changed into the rock which now bears the name of Troll's Stone.

GELLIVÖR.

Near the end of the Roman Catholic times, a certain married couple lived at a farm named Hvoll, situated on a firth in the east part of the country. The farmer was well to do, and wealthy in sheep and cattle. It was commonly reported that a female troll lived on the south side of the firth, who was supposed to be mild and not given to mischief.

One Christmas-eve, after dark, the farmer went out and never returned again, and all search for him was in vain. After the man's disappearance one of the servants took the management of the farm, but was lost in the same

manner, after dark on the Christmas-eve following. After this the widow of the farmer determined to remove all her goods from the house and live elsewhere for the winter, leaving only the sheep and herds under the charge of shepherds, and returning to pass the summer there. As soon as the winter approached she made preparations for leaving Hvoll, until the next spring, and set the herdsmen to take care of the sheep and cattle, and feed them during the cold season.

For home-use she always kept four cows, one of which had just had a calf.

Two days before her intended departure, a woman came to her in her dreams, who was dressed in an old-fashioned dress of poor appearance. The stranger addressed her with these words: "Your cow has just calved, and I have no hope of getting nourishment for my children, unless you will every day, when you deal out the rations, put a share for me in a jug in the dairy. I know that your intention is to move to another farm in two days, as you dare not live here over Christmas, for you know not what has become of your husband and of the servant, on the last two Christmas-eves. But I must tell you that a female troll lives in the opposite mountains, herself of mild temper, but who, two years ago, had a child of such curious appetite and disposition, that she was forced to provide fresh human flesh for it each Christmas. If, however, you will do willingly for

me what I have asked you to do, I will give you good advice as to how you may get rid of the troll from this neighbourhood."

With these words the woman vanished. When the widow awoke she remembered her dream, and getting up, went to the dairy, where she filled a wooden jug with new milk and placed it on the appointed spot. No sooner had she done so than it disappeared. The next evening the jug stood again in the same place, and so matters went on till Christmas.

On Christmas-eve she dreamt again that the woman came to her with a friendly salutation, and said, "Surely you are not inquisitive, for you have not yet asked to whom you give milk every day. I will tell you. I am an elfwoman, and live in the little hill near your house. You have treated me well all through the winter, but henceforth I will ask you no more for milk, as my cow had yesterday a calf. And now you must accept the little gift which you will find on the shelf where you have been accustomed to place the jug for me; and I intend, also, to deliver you from the danger which awaits you to-morrow night. At midnight you will awake and feel yourself irresistibly urged to go out, as if something attracted you; do not struggle against it, but get up and leave the house. Outside the door you will find a giantess standing, who will seize you and carry you in her arms across your grass-field, stride over the river,

and make off with you in the direction of the mountains in which she lives. When she has carried you a little way from the river, you must cry, 'What did I hear then?' and she will immediately ask you, 'What did you hear?' You must answer, 'I heard some one cry, "Mamma Gellivör, Mamma Gellivör!"' which she will think very extraordinary, for she knows that no mortal ever yet heard her name. She will say, 'Oh, I suppose it is that naughty child of mine,' and will put you down and run to the mountains. But in the meantime, while she is engaged with you, I will be in the mountain and will thump and pinch her child without mercy. Directly she has left you, turn your back upon the mountain and run as fast as you possibly can towards the nearest farm along the river banks. When the troll comes back and overtakes you, she will say, 'Why did you not stand still, you wretch?' and will take you again in her arms and stride away with you. As soon as you have gone a little way you must cry again, 'What did I hear then?' She will ask as at first, 'What did you hear?' Then you shall reply again, 'I thought I heard some one calling "Mamma Gellivör, Mamma Gellivör!"' on which she will fling you down as before, and run towards the mountain. And now you must make all speed to reach the nearest church before she can catch you again, for if she succeed in doing so she will treat you horribly in her fury at finding that I have pinched and thumped her

child to death. If, however, you fail in getting to the church in time, I will help you."

When, after this dream, the widow awoke, the day had dawned, so she got up and went to the shelf upon which the jug was wont to stand. Here she found a large bundle, which contained a handsome dress and girdle, and cap, all beautifully embroidered.

About midnight on Christmas-day, when all the rest of the farm people at Hvoll were asleep, the widow felt an irresistible desire to go out, as the elfwoman had warned her, and she did so. Directly she had passed the threshold, she felt herself seized and lifted high in the air by the arms of the gigantic troll, who stalked off with her over the river and towards the mountain. Everything turned out exactly as the elf had foretold, until the giantess flung down her burden for the second time, and the widow made speed to reach the church. On the way, it seemed to her as if some one took hold of her arms and helped her along. Suddenly she heard the sound of a tremendous land-slip on the troll's mountain, and turning round saw in the clear moonlight the giantess striding furiously towards her over the morasses. At this sight she would have fainted with fear, had not she felt herself lifted from the ground and hurried through the air into the church, the door of which closed immediately behind her. It happened that the priests were about to celebrate early mass, and all the people were assembled. Directly after

"Suddenly she heard the sound of a tremendous land-slip, and turning round saw in the clear moonlight the giantess striding furiously towards her over the morasses."

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she came into the church the bells began to ring, and the congregation heard the sound of some heavy fall outside. Looking from one of the windows they saw the troll hurry away from the noise of the bells, and, in her flight, stumble over the wall of the churchyard, part of which fell. Then the troll said to it, "Never stand again," and hurrying away took up her abode in another mountain beyond the confines of the parish of Hvoll.

Here is something more about Gellivör. A mountain in the south of the country, called Bláskógar, was so haunted by this troll, who had now become mischievous, as to be impassable. For two years things went on thus.

It happened at this time that the inhabitants of Thíngeyarsýsla became confused in their computation of dates, and forgot when Christmas-day fell. In their difficulty they determined that their only chance was to send to the bishop at Skálholt, and ask him to put them right again, and they chose as their messenger a certain bold and active man named Olafur. On his way to Skálholt this Olafur passed, late in the day, over the mountain Bláskógar, and being unwilling to linger there went on his way as quickly as possible. When twilight had fallen, he saw a great giantess standing in the way before him, who addressed him with these words:

"Are you going south,
Olafur mouth?
Wry-mouth, I would fain
Warn you, go home again.
Blow your nose, wry-face,
And return with shame to your own place."

Then he replied:

"Oh troll, sitting on Bláfell,
All hail! may you fare well."

To which she replied:

"Of old, few greeted me so well;
Dearest darling, fare thee well,"—

and let him pass without molesting him.

So Olafur went on to Skálholt, where the bishop solved his difficulty immediately for him.

On his way home, as he passed over Bláskógar he met again with the troll, who did not appear so formidable as she had done the first time. She gave him a book, which he looked at and found to be a troll-almanack. In giving him this calendar she said:

"If Christ, the Son of Mary, had done as much for us trolls as you declare that He has done for you human beings, we should scarcely have been so ungrateful as to forget the date of his birth-day."

Then Olafur (whose powers of gratitude certainly do seem to have been rather limited) said to her, "Look eastward! Who rides there on a white horse?"

Whereupon the troll turned round, and as she saw nothing but daybreak, was instantly turned into stone.

So Olafur went home rejoicing.

The Shepherdess.

Once upon a time, in Dalasyslu, a little shepherdess went to church and took the sacrament. When she left the church, instead of going home to dinner, she went to look after her ewes. As she was passing some rocks, she heard a voice from one of them say:

"Ragnhildur in the Red rock!"

Then a voice from the opposite side answered:

"What is the matter, O giant, in the triple rocks?"

"There is a tender little steer running along the road; let us take her; let us eat her."

"Faugh," replied the other, "leave her alone; she looks as if she had been chewing coals."

So the little girl ran away as fast as she could, and heard no more about it.

Jóra the Troll.

A farmer's daughter, young and hopeful, but gifted with a fearful temper, acted as housekeeper to her father. Her name was Jóra.

One day it happened that a horse-fight was held near the farm at which she lived, and one of the combatants was a horse of her father's, of which she was very fond. She was present at the fight, together with many other women; but at the commencement she saw that her favourite horse was getting the worst of it. So she jumped furiously down from her seat, and running up to the victor, seized one of its hind-legs and tore it off. Then she ran off with the leg so quickly, that nobody could catch her. When she came to the river Olfusá, where it forms in a deep gulf a waterfall called Laxfoss, she seized a large rock from the wall of the abyss, and hurling it into the middle of the fall, used it as a stepping-stone, and leaped over, with these words—

"Here is a jump for a maiden like me,
Though soon comes the time when a wife I shall be."

Ever after this, that passage of the river has been called "Troll's-leap."

From this place she ran on for a long way, till she came to a mountain called Heingill, where she took up her abode in a cave (since called "Jóra's Cave"), and became the most malignant troll possible: killing man and beast without mercy. She used to sit on a high peak, which has since been called "Jóra's-seat," and from this eminence looked out for passers-by in all directions; and if she saw one, killed him and ate him up. At last, nearly the whole

neighbourhood had fallen victims to her, and the roads became void, except when, from time to time, large troops of people came, with the vain idea of destroying her.

In this state of affairs, when no means could be found of destroying this wicked troll, a young man, who had been a sailor, went to the King of Norway, and told him of this monster who lived in the Mountain Heingill; at the same time asking his advice how to overcome her.

The king answered, "You must attack Jóra at sunrise on Whit-Sunday; for there is no monster, however fearful, and no troll, however strong, that is not fast asleep at that time. You will find her sleeping with her face to the ground. Here is an axe of silver, which I will give you. With this you must make a chop between her shoulder-bones. Then Jóra, feeling the pain, will turn and say to you, 'May your hands grow to the handle.' But you must instantly answer—'Blade, leave the handle.' Then she will roll down into a lake near the foot of the peak, and be drowned."

With these words he dismissed the young man, who returned to the Heingill, and did as the King of Norway had told him, and killed Jóra.

So that was the end of Jóra the Troll.

Katla.

Once it happened that the Abbot of the Monastery of Thykkvabœ had a housekeeper whose name was Katla, and who was an evil-minded and hot-tempered woman. She possessed a pair of shoes whose peculiarity was, that whoever put them on was never tired of running. Every body was afraid of Katla's bad disposition and fierce temper, even the Abbot himself. The herdsman of the monastery farm, whose name was Bardi, was often dreadfully ill-treated by her, particularly if he had chanced to lose any of the ewes.

One day in the autumn the Abbot and his housekeeper went to a wedding, leaving orders with Bardi to drive in the sheep and milk them before they came home. But unhappily, when the time came, the herdsman could not find all the ewes; so he went into the house, put on Katla's magic shoes, and sallied out in search of the stray sheep. He had a long way to run before he discovered them, but felt no fatigue, so drove all the flock in quite briskly.

When Katla returned, she immediately perceived that the herdsman had been using her shoes, so she took him and drowned him in a large tubful of curds. Nobody knew what had become of the man, and as the winter went on, and the curds in the tub sank lower and lower,

Katla was heard to say these words to herself: "Soon will the waves of milk break upon the foot-soles of Bardi!"

Shortly after this, dreading that the murder should be found out, and that she would be condemned to death, she took her magic shoes, and ran from the monastery to a great ice-mountain, into a rift of which she leaped, and was never seen again.

As soon as she had disappeared, a fearful eruption took place from the mountain, and the lava rolled down and destroyed the monastery at which she had lived. People declared that her witchcraft had been the cause of this, and called the crater of the mountain "The Rift of Katla."

Olafur and the Trolls.

Some people who lived in the south part of the country, at Biskupstúngur, once went into the forest to cut wood for charcoal, and took with them a young lad to hold their horses. While he was left to look after the animals he disappeared, and, though they searched in every direction for him, they failed in finding him.

After three years had passed, the same people were cutting wood in exactly the same place, when the lost boy Olafur came running to them. They asked him where he had been all this time, and how he had gone away.

He said, "While I was looking after the horses, and had

strolled a short distance from them, I suddenly met a gigantic troll-woman, who came rushing towards me and seized me in her arms, and ran off with me until she came into the heart of the wilderness to some great rocks. In these rocks was her cave, into which she carried me. When I was there I saw another giantess coming towards me, of younger appearance than the former, but both were immensely tall. They were dressed in tunics of horse-leather, falling to their feet in front, but very short behind. Here they kept me, and fed me with trout, which one was always out catching, while the other watched me. During the night they forced me to sleep between them on their bed of horse-skins. Sometimes they used to lull me to sleep by singing magical songs in my ears, so that I was enchanted by wonderful dreams. They both were very kind to me, and watched me carefully lest I should wish to escape from them. One day when I had been left alone, I was standing outside the cave, and saw, on the other side of the wilderness, the smoke of the charcoal-burners; so, as I knew that neither of the trolls was at home, I ran off in the direction of the smoke. But I had gone very few paces when one of the trolls saw me, and, running after me, struck me on the cheek, so that I have never lost the bruise, and seizing me in her arms, took me back again to the cave. After this, they looked after me diligently enough.

"Once the younger troll said to the elder, 'How is it

that whenever I touch the bare cheek of Olafur, it seems to burn me like fire?'

"The other replied, 'Do not wonder at that; it is on account of the prayer which Oddur the wry-faced* has taught him.'

"In this way I passed three years; and when I knew that the season for charcoal-burning was come, and that there would be people on the other side of the wilderness assembled for the purpose, I pretended that I was sick, and could not eat any food. They tried every means in their power to cure me, but all in vain, I only became worse.

"Once they asked me whether I could not mention any delicacy for which I had a fancy.

"I said, 'No, except it were shark-flesh, which had been dried in the wind for nine years.'

"The elder one said, 'This will be very difficult to get you, for it is not to be found anywhere in the whole country, but at one farmer's house in the west, Ögur. At any rate, I will try to get it.'

"Then she strode off in search of it. Directly I saw that she was gone, and that the younger troll was busily engaged in catching trout, I took to my heels, and never ceased running towards the smoke of the charcoal-fires until I arrived here safely."

* So called by the troll, as he was a bishop and good Christian, two equally abominable qualities in the eyes of a troll.

When they had heard his story, the burners mounted their horses and took Olafur as speedily as possible to Skálholt. On the way, when they had just crossed the Brúará, whom should they meet but the ugly old troll herself, who came tearing down the rocks towards them, and crying, "Aha! there you are, you wretch!"

Olafur, at the sound of her voice, went mad, and tried to break away from the men, so that it was all they could do to hold him back.

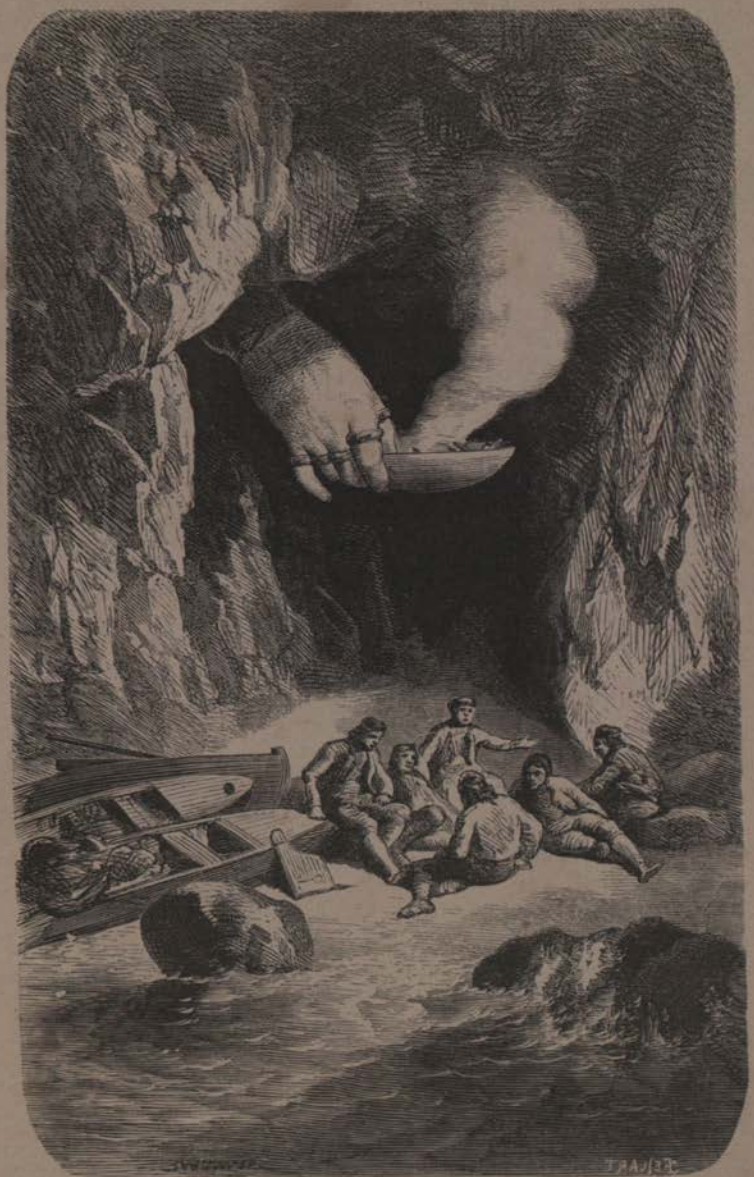
Then the troll seized hold of a horse which stood near her on the rocks, and tearing it asunder, threw the pieces over her shoulder in her fury, and ran back to her cave.

When the news arrived at Skálholt, they took Olafur to the bishop, who kept him by him for a few days, and then sent him into the east part of the country, out of the reach of the trolls, having cured him of his madness.

The Troll in the Skrúdur.

Long ago, the priest's daughter at Hólmar, near the Reidarfjördur, was lost from her father's house, and though search was made for her in all directions, both by sea and land, was not found again.

At the mouth of the Reidarfjördur there is a high rocky island called Skrúdur, upon which the priest used to graze his sheep, from the end of the autumn till the spring.



"When they had fastened their boats, they sat down near the beach, drenched as they were, and to while away the time, sang songs about the Virgin Mary."

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But after he had lost his daughter, it happened that every winter, for several years, his best wethers always disappeared.

Once, in the winter, some fishermen were caught in a storm at sea, and were compelled to take shelter under this rocky island. When they had fastened their boats, they sat down near the beach, drenched as they were, and to while away the time, sang songs about the Virgin Mary,—when suddenly the rock opened, and a gigantic hand came out, with a ring on each finger, and the arm clad in a scarlet velvet sleeve, which thrust down towards them a large bowl full of stir-about, with as many spoons in it as there were fishermen.

At the same time they heard a voice saying, "My wife is pleased now, but not I."

When the men had eaten the stir-about, the bowl disappeared into the rock in the same way as it had appeared. The next day the storm had abated, and they rowed safely to the main land.

At the same season in the year following, the fishermen were again driven to seek shelter on this island by violent winds; and while they sat near the beach, they amused themselves by singing songs about Andri the Hero; when the same hand appeared from the rock, holding out to them a great dish full of fat smoked mutton, and they heard these words, "Now am I pleased, but not my wife."

So the fishermen ate the meat, and the dish was taken back into the rock. Soon afterwards the wind fell, and they were enabled to row safely to shore.

Some years passed away, until Bishop Gudmundur visited that part of his diocese, in order to bind the malignant monsters in rocks and waters and mountains, by his prayers. When he came to Hólmar, he was asked by the priest to consecrate the island Skrúdur; but the same night, the bishop had a dream, in which a tall and splendidly dressed man came to him and said, "Do not obey the priest's injunction, nor consecrate Skrúdur, for it will be very difficult for me to move away with all my chattels before your arrival. Besides this, I may as well tell you, that if you come out to visit that island, it will be your last journey in this life." So the bishop refused, on the morrow, to consecrate the island at all, and the troll was left in peace.

The Shepherd of Silfrúnarstadir.

A man named Gudmundur lived once upon a time at a farm called Silfrúnarstadir, in the bay of Skagafjördur. He was very rich in flocks, and looked upon by his neighbours as a man of high esteem and respectability. He was married, but had no children.

It happened one Christmas-eve, at Silfrúnarstadir, that

the herdsman did not return home at night, and, as he was not found at the sheep-pens, the farmer caused a diligent search to be made for him all over the country, but quite in vain.

Next spring Gudmundur hired another shepherd, named Grímur, who was tall and strong, and boasted of being able to resist anybody. But the farmer, in spite of the man's boldness and strength, warned him to be careful how he ran risks, and on Christmas-eve bade him drive the sheep early into the pens, and come home to the farm while it was still daylight. But in the evening Grímur did not come, and though search was made far and near for him, was never found. People made all sorts of guesses about the cause of his disappearance, but the farmer was full of grief, and after this could not get any one to act as shepherd for him.

At this time there lived a very poor widow at Sjávarborg, who had several children, of whom the eldest, aged fourteen years, was named Sigurdur.

To this woman the farmer at last applied, and offered her a large sum of money if she would allow her son to act as shepherd for him. Sigurdur was very anxious that his mother should have all this money, and declared himself most willing to undertake the office; so he went with the farmer, and during the summer was most successful in his new situation, and never lost a sheep.

At the end of a certain time the farmer gave Sigurdur

a wether, a ewe, and a lamb as a present, with which the youth was much pleased.

Gudmundur became attached to him, and on Christmas-eve begged him to come home from his sheep before sunset.

All day long the boy watched the sheep, and when evening approached, he heard the sound of heavy foot-steps on the mountains. Turning round he saw coming towards him a gigantic and terrible troll.

She addressed him, saying, "Good evening, my Sigurdur. I am come to put you into my bag."

Sigurdur answered, "Are you cracked? Do you not see how thin I am? Surely I am not worth your notice. But I have a sheep and a fat lamb here which I will give you for your pot this evening."

So he gave her the sheep and the lamb, which she threw on to her shoulder, and carried off up the mountain again. Then Sigurdur went home, and right glad was the farmer to see him safe, and asked him whether he had seen anything.

"Nothing whatever, out of the common," replied the boy.

After New Year's day the farmer visited the flock, and, on looking over them, missed the sheep and lamb which he had given the youth, and asked him what had become of them. The boy answered that a fox had killed the lamb, and that the wether had fallen into a bog; adding, "I fancy I shall not be very lucky with *my* sheep."

"So he gave her the sheep and the lamb, which she threw on to her shoulder, and carried off up the mountain."

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When he heard this, the farmer gave him one ewe and two wethers, and asked him to remain another year in his service. Sigurdur consented to do so.

Next Christmas-eve, Gudmundur begged Sigurdur to be cautious, and not run any risks, for he loved him as his own son.

But the boy answered, "You need not fear, there are no risks to run."

When he had got the sheep into the pens about nightfall, the same troll came to him, and said:

"As sure as ever I am a troll, you shall not, this evening, escape being boiled in my pot."

"I am quite at your service," answered Sigurdur, intrepidly; "but you see that I am still very thin; nothing to be compared even to one wether. I will give you, however, for your Christmas dinner, two old and two young sheep. Will you condescend to be satisfied with this offer of mine?"

"Let me see," said the troll; so the lad showed her the sheep, and she, hooking them together by their horns, threw them on to her shoulder, and ran off with them up the mountain. Then Sigurdur returned to the farm, and, when questioned, declared, as before, that he had seen nothing whatever unusual upon the mountain.

"But," he said, "I have been dreadfully unlucky with *my* sheep, as I said I should be." Next summer the farmer gave him four more wethers.

When Christmas-eve had come again, just as Sigurdur was putting the sheep into their pens, the troll came to him, and threatened to take him away with her. Then he offered her the four wethers, which she took, and hooking them together by their horns, threw them over her shoulder. Not content with this, however, she seized the lad, too, tucked him under her arm, and ran off with her burthen to her cave in the mountains.

Here she flung the sheep down, and Sigurdur after them, and ordered him to kill them and shave their skins. When he had done so, he asked her what task she had now for him to perform.

She said, "Sharpen this axe well, for I intend to cut off your head with it."

When he had sharpened it well, he restored it to the troll, who bade him take off his neckerchief; which he did, without changing a feature of his face.

Then the troll, instead of cutting off his head, flung the axe down on the ground, and said, "Brave lad! I never intended to kill you, and you shall live to a good old age. It was I that caused you to be made herdsman to Gudmundur, for I wished to meet with you. And now I will show you in what way you shall arrive at good-fortune. Next spring you must move from Silfrúnarstadir, and go to the house of a silversmith, to learn his trade. When you have learned it thoroughly, you shall take some specimens of silver-work to the farm where the dean's

three daughters live; and I can tell you that the youngest of them is the most promising maiden in the whole country. Her elder sisters love dress and ornaments, and will admire what you bring them, but Margaret will not care about such things. When you leave the house, you shall ask her to accompany you as far as the door, and then as far as the end of the grass-field, which she will consent to do. Then you shall give her these three precious things—this handkerchief, this belt, and this ring; and after that she will love you. But when you have seen me in a dream you must come here, and you will find me dead. Bury me, and take for yourself everything of value that you find in my cave."

Then Sigurdur bade her farewell and left her, and returned to the farm, where Gudmundur welcomed him with joy, having grieved at his long absence, and asked him whether he had seen nothing.

"No," replied the boy; and declared that he could answer for the safety of all future herdsmen. But no more questions would he answer, though the family asked him many. The following spring he went to a silversmith's house, and in two years made himself master of the trade. He often visited Gudmundur, his old master, and was always welcome. Once he went to the trading town of Hofsós, and buying a variety of glittering silver ornaments, took them to Miklibœr, and offered them for sale to the dean's daughters, as the troll had told him. When the elder sisters heard that he had ornaments for sale, they

begged him to let them see them first, in order that they might choose the best of them. Accordingly he showed them his wares, and they bought many trinkets, but Margaret would not even so much as look at the silver ornaments.

When he took leave, he asked the youngest sister to accompany him as far as the door, and when they got there, to come with him as far as the end of the field. She was much astonished at this request, and asked him what he wanted with her, as she had never seen him before. But Sigurdur entreated her the more the more she held back, and at last she consented to go with him. At the end of the field Sigurdur gave her the belt and handkerchief, and put the ring on to her finger.

This done, Margaret said, "I wish I had never taken these gifts, but I cannot now give them you back."

Sigurdur then took leave and went home. But Margaret, as soon as she had received the presents, fell in love with their giver; and finding after a while that she could not live without him, told her father all about it. Her father bade her desist from such a mad idea, and declared that she should never marry the youth as long as he lived to prevent it. On this Margaret pined away, and became so thin from grief, that the father found he would be obliged to consent to her request; and going to the farm at which Sigurdur lived, engaged him as his silversmith.

Not long after, Sigurdur and Margaret were betrothed.

One day the youth dreamed that he saw the old troll, and felt sure from this that she was dead; so he asked the dean to accompany him as far as Silfrúnarstadir, and sleep there one night. When they arrived there, they told Gudmundur that Sigurdur was betrothed to Margaret. When the farmer heard this, he said that it had long been his intention to leave Sigurdur all his property, and offered him the management of the farm the ensuing spring. The youth thanked him heartily, and the dean was glad to see his daughter so soon, and so well, provided for.

Next day Sigurdur asked the farmer and the dean to go with him as far as the middle of the mountain, where they found a cave into which he bade them enter without fear. Inside they saw the troll lying dead on the floor with her face awfully distorted. Then Sigurdur told them all about his interviews with the troll, and asked them to help him to bury her. When they had done so, they returned to the cave and found there as many precious things as ten horses could carry, which Sigurdur took back to the farm.

Not long after, he married the dean's daughter, and prospered to the end of his life, which, as the old troll had prophesied, was a long one.

The Night-trolls.

Two trolls, who, quite contrary to the custom of trolls in general, had taken a great fancy to a church in their neighbourhood, determined to do it a service by taking an island out of the sea and adding it on to the church property. So they waded out one night till they reached one of a group of islands which suited their notions, and having rooted it up they proceeded to take it to shore, the man pulling before, and the wife pushing behind.

But before they could accomplish their task, dawn broke in the east, and they were both suddenly turned into stones.

And there they stand in Breidifjördur, to this day, the husband troll a tall and thin rock, the wife troll a short and broad one, and are called still "old man," and "old woman."

The Story of Bergthór of Bláfell.

In heathen times a troll named Bergthór married a wife, and lived in a cave called Hundahellir, on Bláfell. He was well skilled in the black art, but a very mild-tempered and harmless troll, except when provoked. Near the mountains

stood a farm called Haukadalur, where an old man then lived.

One day the troll came to him and said, "I wish, when I die, to be buried where I can hear the sound of bells and running water; promise, therefore, to place me in the churchyard at Haukadalur. As a sign of my death, my large staff shall stand at your cottage-door; and, as a reward for burying me, you may take what you find in the kettle by the side of my body."

The farmer made him the promise, and Bergthór took leave of him.

Some time afterwards when the servants went out of the farmhouse at Haukadalur early in the morning, they found standing by the door a great wooden staff, and told the farmer of it. As soon as he saw it he recognised it as that of Bergthór, and having caused a coffin to be made, rode in company with some of his men to Bláfell. When they entered the cave, they found Bergthór dead, and placed him in the coffin, wondering among themselves to find so large a corpse so light as his seemed to be. By the side of the bed the farmer discovered a large kettle, and opened it, expecting it to be full of gold. But when he saw that it contained nothing but dead leaves, he fancied that the troll had played him false, and was much wroth. One of the men, however, filled both his gloves with these leaves, and then they carried the coffin with Bergthór in it down to the level ground.

At the foot of the hill they stopped to rest, and the man who had taken the leaves opened his gloves and found that they were full of money.

The farmer seeing this, was struck with astonishment, and turned back with some of his servants to get the rest of it; but, search as they would, they could find no traces of either cave or kettle, and were obliged to leave the mountain disappointed, as everybody else, who made the same search, was too.

They buried the body of the troll, and the mound which marked where they placed him is called "Bergthór's barrow" to this day.

Gryla.

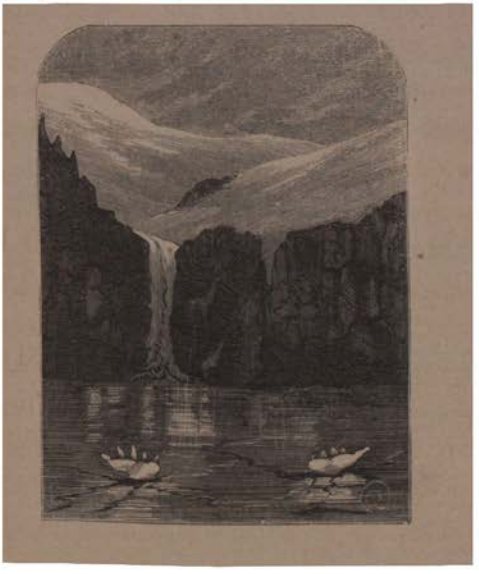
We cannot conclude our stories of trolls without giving a description of Grýla, a bugbear used to frighten children quiet, which is almost horrible enough to frighten them to death.

Grýla had three hundred heads, six eyes in each head, besides two livid and ghostly blue eyes at the back of each neck. She had goat's horns, and her ears were so long as to hang down to her shoulders at one end, and at the other to join the ends of her three hundred noses. On each forehead was a tuft of hair, and on each chin a tangled and filthy beard. Her teeth were like burnt lava. To each thigh she had bound a sack, in which she used to

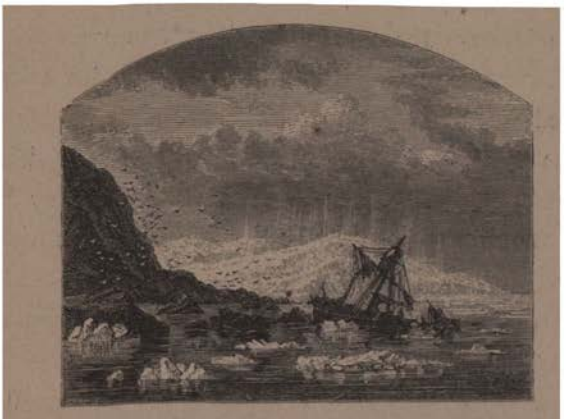
carry naughty children, and she had, moreover, hoofs like a horse. Besides all this, she had fifteen tails, and on each tail a hundred bags of skin, every one of which bags would hold twenty children.

Grýla had a husband named Leppalúdi, a scarecrow, and they had twenty children. In addition to these, they had thirteen more (whom Grýla is reported to have borne before she was married to Leppalúdi the scarecrow) called Christmas-men, as they were supposed to come to human abodes about Christmas time, and take away the naughty children.

More is told about all these trolls which is not worth repeating.



STORIES OF GHOSTS AND GOBLINS.



MURDER WILL OUT.

ONCE upon a time, in a certain churchyard, some people who were digging a grave, found a skull with a knitting-pin stuck through it from temple to temple. The priest took the skull and preserved it until the next Sunday, when he had to perform service.

When the day came, the priest waited until all the people were inside the church, and then fastened up the skull to the top of the porch. After the service the priest and his servant left the church first, and stood outside the door, watching carefully everybody that came out. When all the congregation had passed out without anything strange occurring, they looked in to see if there was any

one still remaining inside. The only person they saw was a very old woman sitting behind the door, who was so unwilling to leave the church, that they were compelled to force her out. As she passed under the porch, three drops of blood fell from the skull on to her white head-dress, and she exclaimed, "Alas, murder will out at last!" Then she confessed, that having been compelled to marry her first husband against her will, she had killed him with a knitting-pin and married another.

She was tried for the murder, though it had happened so many years back, and condemned to death.

Ketill, the Priest of Húsavík.

There once lived a priest at Húsavík, whose name was Ketill. Finding the churchyard rather crowded, he dug up a good many of the coffins, saying, "that they were no use where they were, but only took up room," and used them for firewood.

Some time after, in a kitchen, three old women were sitting round the fire where some of the coffin-planks were burning. A spark flew out and set fire to the dress of one of them, and, as they were sitting close together, the flame quickly caught the dresses of the other two, and burnt so fiercely, that all three were dead before any one could come to their assistance.

Next night the priest saw a man come to his bedside who said, "Do not endeavour to make room in the churchyard by taking out our coffins and burning them; you see that I have already killed three old women, and if you go on in this way I will kill many more, and fill up your graves for you quicker than you will like."

The priest took the warning, burnt no more coffins, and saw no more ghosts, nor were any more old women killed.

White Cap.

A certain boy and girl, whose names this tale telleth not, once lived near a church. The boy being mischievously inclined, was in the habit of trying to frighten the girl in a variety of ways, till she became at last so accustomed to his tricks, that she ceased to care for anything whatever, putting down everything strange that she saw and heard to the boy's mischief.

One washing-day, the girl was sent by her mother to fetch home the linen, which had been spread to dry in the churchyard. When she had nearly filled her basket, she happened to look up, and saw sitting on a tomb near her a figure dressed in white from head to foot, but was not the least alarmed, believing it to be the boy playing her, as usual, a trick. So she ran up to it, and pulling its cap off said, "You shall not frighten me, *this* time." Then when

she had finished collecting the linen she went home; but, to her astonishment—for he could not have reached home before her without her seeing him—the boy was the first person who greeted her on her arrival at the cottage.

Among the linen, too, when it was sorted, was found a mouldy white cap, which appeared to be nobody's property, and which was half full of earth.

The next morning the ghost (for it was a ghost that the girl had seen) was found sitting with no cap upon its head, upon the same tombstone as the evening before; and as nobody had the courage to address it, or knew in the least how to get rid of it, they sent into the neighbouring village for advice.

An old man declared that the only way to avoid some general calamity, was for the little girl to replace on the ghost's head the cap she had seized from it, in the presence of many people, all of whom were to be perfectly silent. So a crowd collected in the churchyard, and the little girl, going forward, half afraid, with the cap, placed it upon the ghost's head, saying, "Are you satisfied now?"

But the ghost, raising its hand, gave her a fearful blow, and said, "Yes; but are *you* now satisfied?"

The little girl fell down dead, and at the same instant the ghost sank into the grave upon which it had been sitting, and was no more seen.

A Ghost's Vengeance.

Some years ago, two friends were conversing together on various subjects, and, among others, on corpses.

"If ever I happen to find a dead man," said the one, "I shall do my best for it, and bury it."

"For my part," replied the other, "I shall take no such trouble, but pass it by like any other carrion."

Some time passed away, and one day Ketill (that was the name of the latter), while out walking, found the corpse of an old woman lying in the road, but passed by without paying the slightest attention to it.

Next night, after he was in bed, this old woman appeared to him and said, "No thanks to you for your neglect of me; for you did me neither good nor evil."

And she looked so horrible, that he jumped out of bed, grasped a large knife that lay near him, and chased the spectre from the house, cursing and swearing, and crying, "Shall I stab you, you old witch?"

After this he went to bed again, and fell asleep; then he saw the old woman a second time, holding her lungs, all clotted with blood, in her hand, and making as if she was going to strike him with them. So he jumped out of bed with the knife, but before he could reach her, she had disappeared.

When he had got into bed again, and was asleep, she

came a third time, and made as if she would strangle him So a third time he jumped out of bed with the knife, but failed in reaching her before she vanished.

And this hag's ghost followed the unhappy Ketill all his life, and drove him with her wrath and spite into an untimely grave. Whether Ketill's friend ever found a corpse and had a chance of carrying out his charitable intentions with regard to it, this story narrates not, neither does it so much as hint at what reward he would have got for his pains.

Dry Bones.

There were once two friends, the elder of whom was a drunkard. It happened that the younger was betrothed to a girl, and had invited the elder to his marriage-feast. But before the time came the drunkard died. The wedding ceremony was performed, and the feast held at the church in which he was buried.

That night the bridegroom dreamed that his friend came to him, and addressed him in piteous tones, saying, "Pour out one keg of brandy into my grave, for my dry old bones are athirst."

Next morning the bridegroom emptied a cask of brandy on to his friend's grave, and never saw his ghost again.

The Boy who did not know what Fear was.

There was once a boy so courageous and spirited that his relations despaired of ever frightening him into obedience to their will, and took him to the parish priest to be brought up. But the priest could not subdue him in the least, though the boy never showed either obstinacy or ill-temper towards him.

Once in the winter three dead bodies were brought to be buried, but as it was late in the afternoon they were put into the church till next day, when the priest would be able to bury them. In those days it was the custom to bury people without coffins, and only wrapped up in grave-clothes. The priest ordered these three bodies to be laid a little distance apart, across the middle of the church.

After nightfall the priest said to the boy, "Run into the church and fetch me the book which I left on the altar."

With his usual willingness he ran into the church, which was quite dark, and half way to the altar stumbled against something which lay on the floor, and fell down on his face. Not in the least alarmed, he got up again, and, after groping about, found that he had stumbled over one of the corpses, which he took in his arms and pushed into the side-benches out of his way. He tumbled over the other two, and disposed of them in like manner. Then, taking the book from the altar, he left the church, shut the door

behind him, and gave the volume to the priest, who asked him if he had encountered anything extraordinary in the church.

"Not that I can remember," said the boy.

The priest asked again, "Did you not find three corpses lying across your passage?"

"Oh yes," replied he, "but what about them?"

"Did they not lie in your way?"

"Yes, but they did not hinder me."

The priest asked, "How did you get to the altar?"

The boy replied, "I stuck the good folk into the side benches, where they lie quietly enough."

The priest shook his head, but said nothing more that night.

Next morning he said to the boy, "You must leave me; I cannot keep near me any longer one who is shameless enough to break the repose of the dead."

The boy, nothing loth, bade farewell to the priest and his family, and wandered about some little time without a home.

Once he came to a cottage, where he slept the night, and there the people told him that the Bishop of Skálholt was just dead. So next day he went off to Skálholt, and arriving there in the evening, begged a night's lodging.

The people said to him, "You may have it and welcome, but you must take care of yourself."

"Why take care of myself so much?" asked the lad.

They told him that after the death of the bishop, no one could stay in the house after nightfall, as some ghost or goblin walked about there, and that on this account every one had to leave the place after twilight.

The boy answered, "Well and good; that will just suit me."

At twilight the people all left the place, taking leave of the boy, whom they did not expect to see again alive.

When they had all gone, the boy lighted a candle and examined every room in the house till he came to the kitchen, where he found large quantities of smoked mutton hung up to the rafters. So, as he had not tasted meat for some time, and had a capital appetite, he cut some of the dried mutton off with his knife, and placing a pot on the fire, which was still burning, cooked it.

When he had finished cutting up the meat, and had put the lid on the pot, he heard a voice from the top of the chimney, which said, "May I come down?"

The lad answered, "Yes, why not?"

Then there fell down on to the floor of the kitchen half a giant,—head, arms, hands, and body, as far as the waist, and lay there motionless.

After this he heard another voice from the chimney, saying, "May I come down?"

"If you like," said the boy; "why not?"

Accordingly down came another part of the giant, from the waist to the thighs, and lay on the floor motionless.

Then he heard a third voice from the same direction, which said, "May I come down?"

"Of course," he replied; "you must have something to stand upon."

So a huge pair of legs and feet came down and lay by the rest of the body, motionless.

After a bit the boy, finding this want of movement rather tedious, said, "Since you have contrived to get yourself all in, you had better get up and go away."

Upon this the pieces crept together, and the giant rose on his feet from the floor, and, without uttering a word, stalked out of the kitchen. The lad followed him, till they came to a large hall, in which stood a wooden chest. This chest the goblin opened, and the lad saw that it was full of money. Then the goblin took the money out in handfuls, and poured it like water over his head, till the floor was covered with heaps of it; and, having spent half the night thus, spent the other half in restoring the gold to the chest in the like manner. The boy stood by and watched him filling the chest again, and gathering all the stray coins together by sweeping his great arms violently over the floor, as if he dreaded to be interrupted before he could get them all in, which the lad fancied must be because the day was approaching.

When the goblin had shut up the coffer, he rushed past the lad as if to get out of the hall; but the latter said to him, "Do not be in too great a hurry."

"I must make haste," replied the other, "for the day is dawning."

But the boy took him by the sleeve and begged him to remain yet a little longer for friendship's sake.

At this the goblin waxed angry, and, clutching hold of the youth, said, "Now you shall delay me no longer."

But the latter clung tight to him, and slipped out of the way of every blow he dealt, and some time passed away in this kind of struggle. It happened, however, at last, that the giant turned his back to the open door, and the boy, seeing his chance, tripped him up and butted at him with his head, so that the other fell heavily backwards, half in and half out of the hall, and broke his spine upon the threshold. At the same moment the first ray of dawn struck his eyes through the open house door, and he instantly sank into the ground in two pieces, one each side of the door of the hall. Then the courageous boy, though half dead from fatigue, made two crosses of wood and drove them into the ground where the two parts of the goblin had disappeared. This done, he fell asleep till, when the sun was well up, the people came back to Skálholt. They were amazed and rejoiced to find him still alive, asking him whether he had seen anything in the night.

"Nothing out of the common," he said.

So he stayed there all that day, both because he was tired, and because the people were loth to let him go.

In the evening, when the people began as usual to leave

the place, he begged them to stay, assuring them that they would be troubled by neither ghost nor goblin. But in spite of his assurances they insisted upon going, though they left him this time without any fear for his safety. When they were gone, he went to bed and slept soundly till morning.

On the return of the people he told them all about his struggle with the goblin, showed them the crosses he had set up, and the chestful of money in the hall, and assured them that they would never again be troubled at night, so need not leave the place. They thanked him most heartily for his spirit and courage, and asked him to name any reward he would like to receive, whether money or other precious things, inviting him, in addition, to remain with them as long as ever he chose. He was grateful for their offers, but said, "I do not care for money, nor can I make up my mind to stay longer with you."

Next day he addressed himself to his journey, and no persuasion could induce him to remain at Skálholt. For he said, "I have no more business here, as you can now, without fear, live in the bishop's house." And taking leave of them all, he directed his steps northwards, into the wilderness.

For a long time nothing new befell him, until one day he came to a large cave, into which he entered. In a smaller cave within the other he found twelve beds, all in disorder and unmade. As it was yet early, he thought he could do

no better than employ himself in making them, and having made them, threw himself on to the one nearest the entrance, covered himself up, and went to sleep.

After a little while he awoke and heard the voices of men talking in the cave, and wondering who had made the beds for them, saying that, whoever he was, they were much obliged to him for his pains. He saw, on looking out, that they were twelve armed men of noble aspect. When they had had supper, they came into the inner cave and eleven of them went to bed. But the twelfth man whose bed was next to the entrance, found the boy in it, and calling to the others they rose and thanked the lad for having made their beds for them, and begged him to remain with them as their servant, for they said that they never found time to do any work for themselves, as they were compelled to go out every day at sunrise to fight their enemies, and never returned till night. The lad asked them why they were forced to fight day after day? They answered that they had over and over again fought, and overcome their enemies, but that though they killed them over-night they always came to life again before morning, and would come to the cave and slay them all in their beds if they were not up and ready on the field at sunrise.

In the morning the cave-men went out fully armed, leaving the lad behind to look after the household work.

About noon he went in the same direction as the men had taken, in order to find out where the battle-field was, and as soon as he had espied it in the distance, ran back to the cave.

In the evening the warriors returned weary and dispirited, but were glad to find that the boy had arranged everything for them, so that they had nothing more to do than eat their supper and go to bed.

When they were all asleep, the boy wondered to himself how it could possibly come to pass that their enemies rose every night from the dead. So moved with curiosity was he, that as soon as he was sure that his companions were fast asleep he took what of their weapons and armour he found to fit him best, and stealing out of the cave, made off in the direction of the battle-field. There was nothing at first to be seen there but corpses and trunkless heads, so he waited a little time to see what would happen. About dawn he perceived a mound near him open of itself, and an old woman in a blue cloak come out with a glass phial in her hand. He noticed her go up to a dead warrior, and having picked up his head, smear his neck with some ointment out of the phial and place the head and trunk together. Instantly the warrior stood erect, a living man. The hag repeated this to two or three, until the boy seeing now the secret of the thing, rushed up to her and stabbed her to death as well as the men she had raised, who were yet stupid and heavy as if after sleep. Then taking the

phial, he tried whether he could revive the corpses with the ointment, and found on experiment that he could do so successfully. So he amused himself for a while in reviving the men and killing them again, till, at sunrise, his companions arrived on the field.

They were mightily astonished to see him there, and told him that they had missed him as well as some of their weapons and armour; but they were rejoiced to find their enemies lying dead on the field instead of being alive and awaiting them in battle array, and asked the lad how he had got the idea of thus going at night to the battle-field, and what he had done.

He told them all that had passed, showed them the phial of ointment, and, in order to prove its power, smeared the neck of one of the corpses, who at once rose to his feet, but was instantly killed again by the cave-men. They thanked the boy heartily for the service he had rendered them, and begged him to remain among them, offering him at the same time money for his work. He declared that he was quite willing, paid or unpaid, to stay with them, as long as they liked to keep him. The cave-men were well pleased with his answer, and having embraced the lad, set to work to strip their enemies of their weapons: made a heap of them with the old woman on the top, and burned them; and then, going into the mound, appropriated to themselves all the treasures they found there. After this they proposed the game of killing each

other, to try how it was to die, as they could restore one another to life again. So they killed each other, but by smearing themselves with the ointment, they at once returned to life.

Now this was great sport for a while.

But once, when they had cut off the head of the lad, they put it on again wrongside before. And as the lad saw himself behind, he became as if mad with fright, and begged the men to release him by all means from such a painful sight.

But when the cave-folk had run to him and, cutting off his head, placed it on all right again, he came back to his full senses, and was as fearless as ever before.

The boy lived with them ever afterwards, and no more stories are told about him.

The Two Sigurdurs.

A farmer once had a son named Sigurdur, who was so ill-tempered that no one could live in peace with him.

One day it happened that a man whose name was also Sigurdur, came to the farmer's house and asked shelter of him for the winter, which the farmer consented to give him. The stranger did nothing but play the flute, and the farmer's son became so fond of him that he cared for nobody else.

In the spring the stranger went away, and Sigurdur became so sick of home-life that he also left the farm and went in search of his beloved namesake. From house to house, from parish to parish, and from district to district, he went, continually asking for Sigurdur. At last at a certain priest's house where he made the same inquiry, they told him that a man of that name had just died there, and lay in the church. On being admitted into the church the boy sat down by the open coffin, intending to watch over it all night.

At midnight the corpse of Sigurdur (for it really was his friend) rose from the coffin and left the church, but his namesake sat still and awaited his return. At dawn the corpse came back, but Sigurdur would not let him, in spite of his entreaties, return to his coffin before telling him how he had spent the night outside the church.

So the dead man said, "I have been looking over my money. Now I must get into the coffin."

"No," replied the other; "you must first tell me where your money is."

"In one of the corners of the family-room," said the other.

"How much is there of it?"

"One barrelful."

"Did you do nothing," again inquired the youth, "besides counting your money?"

The corpse denied it, but when the living Sigurdur

pressed him to tell him how he had been employed, on pain of refusing to admit him into his coffin again, the other answered, "Well, then! I have killed the priest's lady, who has just had a child."

"Why did you commit so mean a crime?" asked Sigurdur.

"Because," replied the corpse, "during her lifetime I tried to seduce her, but she always resisted my persuasions."

"How did you kill her?"

The dead Sigurdur answered, "I drove all the life in her body into her little finger."

"Can she not be revived?" asked the youth.

"Yes! If you can untie the thread that is round her finger without shedding any blood, she will come to life. And now I really must get into my coffin."

The other only allowed him to do so on his promising that he would not ever try to move again.

In the morning, as soon as the sun was fully risen, Sigurdur left the church and entered the family-room, where he found everybody plunged in grief, and, on his asking them what was the matter, they told him that the priest's wife had died in the night, and nobody could tell her complaint. So he asked permission to see her, which was granted him, and having gone up to the dead woman and undone the cord which he found round her little finger, he urged back the life from it into her body, and she sat

up alive and well. Then he told the priest about his interview with the corpse of Sigurdur, and, to prove his words still further, showed him the money hidden in the corner of the family-room. The priest thanked him cordially for the good service he had done him, and after this Sigurdur became as much beloved as he had before been hated.

The Deacon of Myrká.

A long time ago, a deacon lived at Myrká, in Eyafjördur. He was in love with a girl named Gudrún, who dwelt in a farm on the opposite side of the valley, separated from his house by a river.

The deacon had a horse with a grey mane, which he was always in the habit of riding, and which he called Faxi.

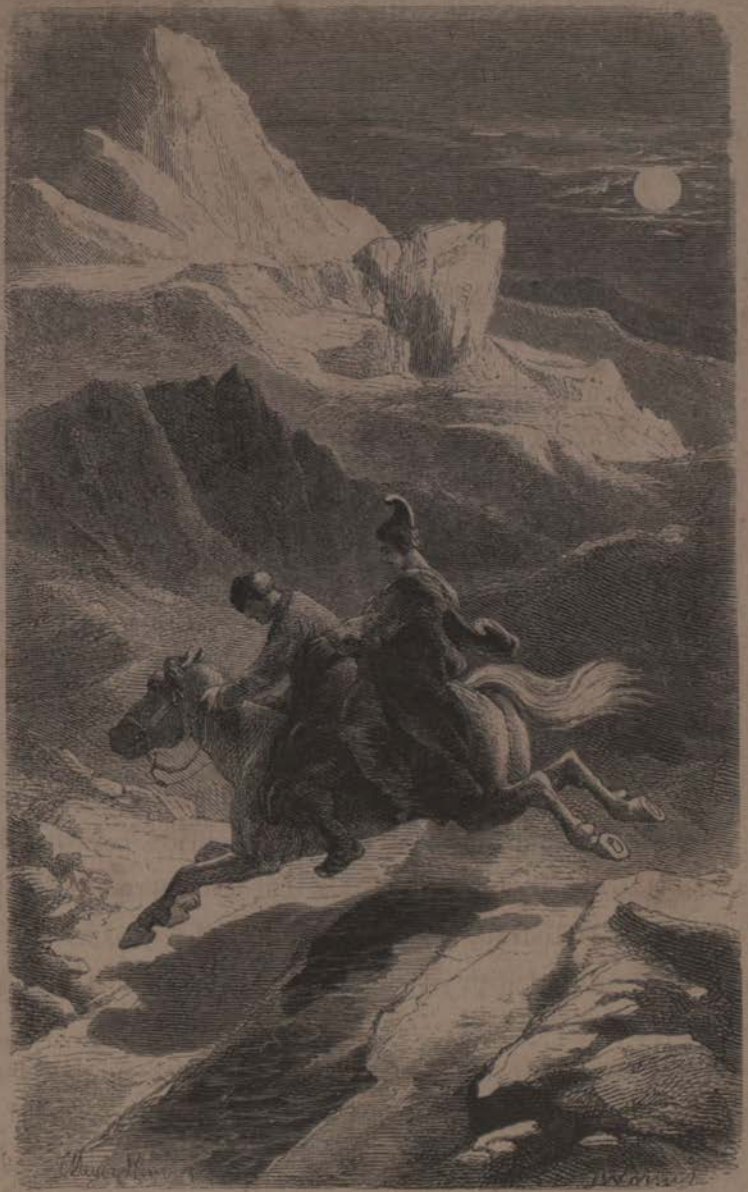
A short time before Christmas, the deacon rode to the farm at which his betrothed lived, and invited her to join in the Christmas festivities at Myrká, promising to fetch her on Christmas-eve. Some time before he had started out on this ride, there had been heavy snow and frost; but this very day there came so rapid a thaw, that the river over which the deacon had safely ridden, trusting to the firmness of the ice, became impassable during the short time he spent with his betrothed; the floods rose, and huge masses of drift-ice were whirled down the stream.

When the deacon had left the farm, he rode on to the river, and being deep in thought did not perceive at first the change that had taken place. As soon, however, as he saw in what state the stream was, he rode up the banks until he came to a bridge of ice, on to which he spurred his horse. But when he arrived at the middle of the bridge, it broke beneath him, and he was drowned in the flood.

Next morning, a neighbouring farmer saw the deacon's horse grazing in a field, but could discover nothing of its owner, whom he had seen the day before cross the river, but not return. He at once suspected what had occurred, and going down to the river, found the corpse of the deacon, which had drifted to the bank, with all the flesh torn off the back of his head, and the bare white skull visible. So he brought the body back to Myrká, where it was buried a week before Christmas.

Up to Christmas-eve the river continued so swollen, that no communication could take place between the dwellers on the opposite banks, but that morning it subsided, and Gudrún, utterly ignorant of the deacon's death, looked forward with joy to the festivities to which she had been invited by him.

In the afternoon Gudrún began to dress in her best clothes, but before she had quite finished, she heard a knock at the door of the farm. One of the maid-servants opened the door, but seeing nobody there, thought it was



"*The horse leaped over the black and rapid stream. At the same moment the head of the deacon nodded forward.*"

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because the night was not sufficiently light, for the moon was hidden for the time by clouds. So saying, "Wait there till I bring a light," went back into the house; but she had no sooner shut the outer door behind her, than the knock was repeated, and Gudrún cried out from her room, "It is some one waiting for me."

As she had by this time finished dressing, she slipped only one sleeve of her winter cloak on, and threw the rest over her shoulders hurriedly. When she opened the door, she saw the well-known Faxi standing outside, and by him a man whom she knew to be the deacon. Without a word he placed Gudrún on the horse, and mounted in front of her himself, and off they rode.

When they came to the river it was frozen over, all except the current in the middle, which the frost had not yet hardened. The horse walked on to the ice, and leaped over the black and rapid stream which flowed in the middle. At the same moment the head of the deacon nodded forward, so that his hat fell over his eyes, and Gudrún saw the large patch of bare skull gleam white in the midst of his hair. Directly afterwards, a cloud moved from before the moon, and the deacon said—

"The moon glides,
Death rides,
Seest thou not the white place
In the back of my head,
Garún, Garún?"

Not a word more was spoken till they came to Myrká, where they dismounted.

Then the man said:

"Wait here for me, Garún, Garún,
While I am taking Faxi, Faxi,
Outside the hedges, the hedges!"

When he had gone, Gudrún saw near her in the churchyard, where she was standing, an open grave, and half sick with horror, ran to the church porch, and seizing the rope, tolled the bells with all her strength. But as she began to ring them, she felt some one grasp her and pull so fiercely at her cloak that it was torn off her, leaving only the one sleeve into which she had thrust her arm before starting from home. Then turning round, she saw the deacon jump headlong into the yawning grave, with the tattered cloak in his hand, and the heaps of earth on both sides fall in over him, and close the grave up to the brink.

Gudrún knew now that it was the deacon's ghost with whom she had had to do, and continued ringing the bells till she roused all the farm-servants at Myrká.

That same night, after Gudrún had got shelter at Myrká and was in bed, the deacon came again from his grave and endeavoured to drag her away, so that no one could sleep for the noise of their struggle.

This was repeated every night for a fortnight, and Gudrún could never be left alone for a single instant, lest

the goblin deacon should get the better of her. From time to time, also, a neighbouring priest came and sat on the edge of the bed, reading the Psalms of David to protect her against this ghostly persecution.

But nothing availed, till they sent for a man from the north country, skilled in witchcraft, who dug up a large stone from the field, and placed it in the middle of the guest-room at Myrká. When the deacon rose that night from his grave and came into the house to torment Gudrún, this man seized him, and by uttering potent spells over him, forced him beneath the stone, and exorcised the passionate demon that possessed him, so that there he lies in peace to this day.

The Son of the Goblin.

The farm Bakki (now called Prestbakki, in Hrútafjördur) once stood further north than it does now, and the reasons of its being moved from its ancient to its present position are as follows.

It happened that a certain farmer's son courted the daughter of the priest who lived at Bakki, but met with a refusal of his offers, which grieved him so sorely, that he fell sick and died, and was buried at the church near the priest's house. This had happened in summer. The winter following, people noticed a certain strangeness in

the demeanour of the priest's daughter, for which they could not account.

One evening, it happened that her foster-mother, an old woman and a wise withal, went out to the churchyard with her knitting, as it was warm enough, and the moon had but few clouds to wade through.

Some time before this, her foster-child had told her that since his death her old lover had often been to see her, and that she found herself now with child, whose father had assured her that the infant would prove an ill-fated one; and the unfortunate girl had asked the old woman to try to prevent, from that time forth, her ghostly lover's visits; and it was for this purpose that the good dame had gone out into the churchyard. She went to the grave of the young man, which was yawning wide open, and threw her ball of thread down into it, and having done so, sat down on its edge to knit. There she sat until the ghost came, who at once begged her to take up the ball of thread from the grave, so that he might enter his coffin and take his rest.

But the old woman said, "I have no mind to do so, unless you tell me what you do out of your grave thus at night."

He answered, "I visit the priest's daughter, for he has no means of preventing my doing so. Ere long she will be delivered of a boy."

Then the old woman said, "Tell me this boy's fate."

"His fate," replied the other, "is, that he will be a priest at Bakki, and the church with all its congregation will sink down to hell the first time he pronounces the blessing from the altar, and then my vengeance will be complete, for the injury the priest did me in not allowing me to marry his daughter during my lifetime."

"Your prophecy is, indeed, a great one, if it meets with a fulfilment," answered the old woman; "but are there no means by which so horrible a curse can be prevented?"

The ghost replied, "The only means are for some one to stab the priest the moment he begins to pronounce the blessing; but I do not fancy that anybody will undertake that task."

When she had gathered this information, the old woman said to him, "Go now into your grave, and be sure never again to come out of it."

After this the old woman drew up her ball of thread, and the corpse leaped into the grave, over which the earth closed itself. Then she recited over the grave some magic spells, which bound the corpse in its last rest for ever; and returning home, told nobody what had passed between her and the goblin-lover.

Some time afterwards, the girl was delivered of a fine and healthy boy, who was brought up at Bakki by his mother and his grandfather (though the latter did not know who its father was). In his early youth people saw that he excelled all his companions both in mind and body; and

when his education was complete, and he had arrived at he proper age, he became his grandfather's curate.

Now, the old woman saw that something must be done to prevent the approaching ill-fate, so she went to her son, who was a man of great courage, and one who did not shrink from trifles, and told him the whole story of her interview with the goblin, and begged him to stab the young priest directly he began to pronounce his blessing from the altar, promising herself to take all the consequences of the deed. He was at first very unwilling to do this, but when she pressed him with earnest entreaties, he at last made the promise she required, and confirmed it with an oath.

At length the day came on which the young curate was to perform service for the first time, and the large congregation assembled in the church were struck with his eloquence and sweet voice. But when the youth stood at the altar and raised his hands for the benediction, the old woman signed to her son, who rushed forward and stabbed him, so that he fell dead on the spot. Horror-struck at this fearful act, many rushed forward and seized the murderer, but those who went to the altar to raise the priest found nothing of him but the top bone of his neck, which lay where he had been standing. Every one now saw that what had happened was no every-day murder, but that some goblin had had to do with it; and the old woman, standing in the midst of them, told them the whole story.

When they had heard it they recovered from their panic, and thanked her for her foresight, and her son for his quickness and courage. They then perceived that the east end of the church had sunk down a little into the ground, because the priest had had time to pronounce the first few syllables of the blessing.

After this, the farm of Bakki was so haunted by goblins that it was removed from its old to its present situation.

The Story of Grímur, who killed Skeljúngur.

A certain man was named Kári, the son of Össur. He was the nephew of Hjálmúlfr, who had made himself possessor of Blönduhlíd, extending from the river Djúpadalsá to the river Nordurá, and who dwelt at Hjálmúlfsstadir, and is buried in the barrow called Ulfshaugur, south of the farm.

Kári came from Norway, in company with Hjálmúlfr, made himself possessor of the land between Nordurá and Merkigil, and dwelt at the farm called Flatatúga; whereupon he was named Túngukári.

He had a son, Thorgrímur, a strong and wise man, who married Ashildur, daughter of Thorbrandur, of Thorbrandsstadir, in Nordurárdalur, and with her he received the property belonging to the farm Silfrastadir, where he began his life as a farmer, and became very wealthy in flocks and herds.

Thorbrandur lived at Thorbrandsstadir, to a high age, and possessed, besides this farm, one called Haukagil. At the former of these he built the famous hall, so much spoken of in the Sagas, through which the highway ran, where there were tables of provisions always ready for every passer-by. Thorbrandur was buried on the other side of the river Nordurá, where a large mound was raised above him, in a place he had himself chosen, whence he could see over both Thorbrandsstadir and Haukagil.

Thorgrímur of Silfrastadir had a son by his wife, named Grímur, who was one of the handsomest and best-grown men in Skagafjördur. He had also a daughter, named Ingibjörg, who was both winsome and wise, and was looked upon as one of the chief ladies in all that neighbourhood.

Thorgrímur had large flocks, as his pasture-grounds were good, and was therefore in need of an active herdsman, if he wished all to go well with his sheep. Once it happened that a vessel from Norway came into the harbour of Kolbeinsá late in the summer. Thorgrímur, with many other farmers, rode down to the ship, the merchants of which had on board, besides other wares, a certain bondman named Skeljúngur. He was tall, strong, and of an indomitable temper.

Thorgrímur, being apprised by the merchants that this man was for sale, went to him and asked him for what work he was fit.

Skeljúngur answered, "Thralls are not fit for much. But in good weather I have not refused ere now to watch sheep, and if you will, I can do so still."

Thorgrímur said, "I will risk buying you if you will guard my sheep, which are numerous, and their pastures dangerous."

"Do as you like," answered Skeljúngur.

So the farmer purchased this bondman, and took him home to Silfrastadir, where he commenced his duties as herdsman towards the beginning of the winter, and Thorgrímur soon perceived that the man had the strength and courage of two, in everything he undertook.

Skeljúngur was very obedient to his master, but could not agree with the other men of the farm, and least of all with Grímur.

Amongst the servants at the farm was a bond-maid named Bóla, who was fiendishly evil-minded and malicious, insomuch that nobody could come to any understanding with her. Many fancied that her nature partook of that of the trolls; and her quarrels with Skeljúngur were so fierce and frequent, that the farmer had repeatedly to interfere between them.

At last, Bóla ran away from Silfrastadir in a fit of rage, and every one was convinced that she had taken up her abode in a deep rocky gulf, near the farm. In this gulf there were three high waterfalls, as a little river ran through it. The approach to the two lower ones was diffi-

cult; to the uppermost one, under which Bóla was supposed to have taken up her abode in a cave, nearly impossible. From this place she infested the neighbourhood, part of which, with the gulf itself, was subsequently called by her name.

Once, early in the winter, Thorgrímur lost five of his best wethers from Skeljúngur's keeping, and it was suspected that Bóla had taken them. Skeljúngur became very cross at this, and wanted to find out whether she had taken them or not. But the farmer entreated him to run no such risk, assuring him that it would be far better to remain quiet. The man obeyed him, and, for the present, desisted from any search into the matter.

Next autumn eight wethers were lost from Skeljúngur's charge, who still did not endeavour to find them, as the farmer had begged him not to do so.

The third autumn ten more were lost, and then Skeljúngur became so enraged that he would not listen in the least to what the farmer said. So he ran off in a state of blind and mad rage, like that in which the warriors of old could fight their best, and hastened to the gulf, and over the waterfall into the cave; which leap has been since called "Skeljúngur's leap."

Now, after this, nothing distinct is known concerning his struggle with Bóla; but the story runs, that, after a fierce and long fight with her, he contrived to suffocate her in the deep pool beneath the fall. This done, Skel-

júngur returned to the farm, and said that he fancied the stealing of his sheep would not be continued now; but Thorgrímur, far from pleased, held his peace.

People soon found that Skeljúngur's temper had become more diabolical than ever, since his struggle with Bóla, so that it became almost impossible to treat with him; but he still continued faithful and attached to his master, and so time passed quietly on.

Now we must return to Grímur, the son of Thorgrímur, who had lived with his father to manhood, and was now the most active of all his fellows.

One day Grímur came to his father, and said, "Advance me some money from my inheritance. I wish to travel hence and become acquainted with the customs of other countries; for to sit here at home like a girl will prove but a scanty advantage to me."

The farmer replied, "You shall not need to ask twice. I will give you money enough; but I have a foreboding that at some future time we shall need you here; and then you had better be at home than away; and I fear that you will have some great dangers to overcome."

Grímur answered, "I will run the risk;" and after this went on board a vessel belonging to some Norway merchants, with plenty of money for his travels. He took an affectionate leave of his father, and sailed away. But the ship had started very late, having been prevented from sailing by the Greenland ice, and when once at sea, was so

hard tossed by storms, as to lose her way and be driven hither and thither all the rest of the summer. At the approach of the winter, they were, in a heavy snow-storm, carried near the shores of an unknown country, where there was no harbour, and where the coast was surrounded by cliffs. Here they were wrecked, and every life was lost, and all the merchandise swallowed by the waves; Grímur alone being able to swim to shore, where he wandered about forlorn and tired, not knowing whither to go, till he heard the sound of some one cutting wood near him. He went in that direction, and found a young and strongly-built man, hewing wood with a large axe.

Grímur saluted this youth, who courteously received him, and asked him about his journey, and how he had come there.

Grímur answered, "I am an Icelander, by name Grímur. My ship, with all its merchandise and all my companions, has been wrecked, and all lost but myself. Tell me now, to what land I have been driven; who is its ruler? and whom do I now address?"

The other replied. "I am your namesake, for my name is also Grímur. You have come to the wildernesses of Greenland, a long way from the thickly-inhabited districts; but my father's hut is not far hence. His name also is Grímur, and my mother's Thórhildur, and I have a sister, two years older than myself, named Ingibjörg. No one else lives in the house, nor have we many neighbours.

Now, as matters stand, I think you can do no better than accompany me home to my father, appeal to his good feeling, and see what comes of it. And I suppose he will do better who aids you than he who is against you."

To this the Icelandic Grímur agreed, and the young men went towards the hut together.

The cottage was neat and strongly built, and the Greenland Grímur brought his namesake into the room where his father was sitting; an old man of noble aspect, hale for his age, and active in all his movements. His wife, an aged woman, was very neat in her dress, and imposing in her demeanour.

The old man saluted his son kindly, and said, "Who is the young fellow with you?"

His son replied, "He is an Icelander who has been wrecked on the shore, and has lost all his possessions. I beg you, my father, to help him, for he is an honourable and well-born youth."

His father said, "I was not curious concerning him, but as he has been driven to shore, to the compassion of his fellow-creatures, take him with you, my son, we bid him welcome for the winter."

The young men thanked the farmer for his kindness, and from that time became, as it were, brothers. Ingibjörg was a noble and lovely maiden, and she and the Icelander became much attached to one another, at which no one wondered, as all were fond of him.

So the winter passed, until shortly before Christmas-time, when it happened one day, that the brothers, while gathering drift-wood on the shore, saw a monster in woman's form, with large and repulsive countenance, approaching them.

She addressed them with these words:—"I must tell you, young men, that my mother Skráma, who lives in the mountains, invites you to her Christmas festivities, and is very anxious that you should accept her invitation."

The youths answered her only with curses, and spurned her invitation; whereupon she at once disappeared.

When they came home late in the evening, the old man asked them whether they had any news for him, but they said they had nothing new to relate to him. He continued, however. "I am sure that you have seen something unusual, and that you will not refuse to tell me the truth about it."

So they told him that they had seen the monster, and laughed to scorn her invitation; "for," they said, "what cared we for her?"

The old man answered, "It will not do for you to reject her invitation. And now, I will give you some useful information. In the mountains some way from here, is a valley with a cave in it, in which lives a trollwoman, Járngerdur by name, who is an awful and malignant creature. Her two daughters live with her, Skinnbrók and Skinnhetta, who are very dangerous to have to do with.

Now, because I and Járngerdur have for long been opposed to one another, and I have always had the advantage, she will seek to take vengeance upon you, by her troll's arts. But it will not do for you two to go by yourselves to her, therefore I and my dog Grámúll will join your company. This Járngerdur is the worst troll of all the infernal tribe, and upon whomsoever her dying eyes shall fall, he will rot alive beneath their glare, in that very hour. Therefore we must make all possible preparations, and take every precaution, if we wish to escape from her alive."

The young men begged the old farmer to make for them every needful preparation, declaring that they trusted implicitly in his great experience.

On the morning of Christmas-eve they left the hut; had to reach the valley through heavy snow drifts, and would have lost their way to it, had not the dog Grámúll found the path for them. In the evening they saw before them a large cave in some rocks, and following the narrow passage, came into it. There was a blazing fire in the cave, by which two young, monstrous, and hideous trollwomen were sitting.

The one, Skinnbrók, said to the other, Skinnhetta, "See! we shall not lie alone to-night, and to-morrow we will cut those young men up for our Christmas feast. But if this old Grímur can carry out his intentions, we shall all perish. I would that the old man could have some punishment for his curiosity in coming here against our will."

Then Grímur the Icelander went close to the fire and said: "Is the Christmas meal ready? and the table dressed?"

The sisters started at this, and sprang to their feet; and Skinnbrók ran towards Grímur the Icelander, to struggle with him, saying, "I suppose you will not consider yourself the worse treated if you embrace such a fine lady as myself, before the Christmas feast?"

Then they fought together with brute fury, and dashed one another from corner to corner of the cave. After a while the Icelander found that, troll as she was, she began to flag and lose her breath; then he tried to trip her up, and at last flung her down so that her neck was broken, and he left her dead, he himself being tired and bruised after the struggle.

Now Skinnhetta, in her turn, attacked Grímur the Greenlander, and they had a long and fierce fight, each trying to throw the other into the fire; but at last Grímur succeeded in lifting her up from the ground and hurling her, head foremost, into the boiling kettle, where he kept her till she died. After that he rested himself.

Meanwhile, the old troll-mother had attacked Grímur the father, and their struggle was a deadly one. When the brothers saw that their father began to lose strength, they set the dog Grámúll upon the troll. The hound flew savagely at her, and tore her side so that her entrails were

seen, and the dog rent them out. At this the troll fell down, and in dying fixed a horrible and ghastly glare upon Grámúll, till the dog rotted beneath her eyes, and crumbled to dust at her feet; and thus died Járngerdur and the dog that had slain her.

Then the men lighted a great fire outside the cave, and burned the bodies of the three trolls. They found over the bed of the old troll a spear, which was a great rarity; glittering as glass, and adorned with gold. After this they searched all through the cave, and found many good things and valuable; all of which they bound into bundles and took away with them, the old Grímur carrying the spear, and returned home.

Here Grímur the Icelander dwelt for a long time, beloved by them all, but by none more than by the daughter, Ingibjörg.

The story now returns to Iceland. It happened that the winter after Grímur's departure, a meeting was appointed at Hofmannaflöt. To this many of the strongest men in the country, and even the giants and the mountaineers, came to make trials of their strength in wrestling. There came also Lágálfur, the son of Lítildrós. When he came from this meeting in the south, down the mountains to the Skagafjördur, he had to cross the river Nordurá, opposite to Silfrastadir. It was late in the day, and the snow drifted heavily, and just now Lágálfur saw a man of huge stature striding towards him along the bank of

the river. The giant saluted Lágálfur, and asked him what news he had to tell. Lágálfur told him all the most important news, and asked with whom he was speaking.

The other answered: "I am Skeljúngur, and I come from my flocks. I dare say you are a great and strong man, but I am cold with standing over my sheep all day, and it would be good sport for us to wrestle a little, to warm ourselves."

Lágálfur replied: "I have for some time had good sport in wrestling with gallant men, but although you look like a rascal and a troll, I will not refuse to wrestle with you. Let each man look to himself."

Skeljúngur consented to this, and having thrown off their outer clothes, they began to wrestle. Lágálfur soon felt that Skeljúngur had the strength of two strong men, and that he must not spare his own strength against him. Now they wrestled with such fury that frozen stones started from the ground beneath their feet. When Lágálfur was tired of this undecided struggle, he tried to trip up his adversary, and a fit of blind madness and heroic fury seized them. At last Lágálfur lifted Skeljúngur by his hip and threw him so high, that when he fell both his thighs were broken upon the frozen ground, and both his shoulders dislocated. Then his enemy set upon him with such rage that he left him at the point of death.

After this, Lágálfur went to the farm Silfrastadir, where

all the people were already assembled in the family-room, and sang outside the window a verse, telling how he had fought with and subdued Skeljúngur.

"Quickly over the earth I ran,
And dealt with that rascally shepherd-man;
The strength-failing thrall himself brought it to be
That he should be dealt with so hardly by me.
The hair-brained fellow was beaten, and found
A good drubbing on the stony ground.
Skeljúngur scarcely will find him again
To watch his sheep and to guard the pen."

From this farm he went to another house, named Frostastödum, and stopped at that end of the house at which the farmer slept, where was a window through which he could see into the house. He saw the farmer sitting there, a grey-headed man, and heard him scolding his wife for having taken a handful of meal from the leather sack hanging in the roof over the farmer's head, and at last he struck her with his hand upon the cheek, so that she wept. Then Lágálfur thrust through the window the spear which he held in his hand, so as to cut the cords of the leather meal-bag, which fell down suddenly on the farmer's head, and sent him fainting to the ground. As soon as he saw that the farmer had recovered his senses, he retired from the window and sang,—

"The meal-sack fell from the roof above
Upon the old man's pate,
And the beaten wife sat bewailing her fate
Till Lágálfur's spear avenged the sweet love."

Then Lágálfur went home, and henceforth is no more seen in our story, which returns now to Silfrastadir.

The farmer began to suspect something about Skeljúngur, when he heard Lágálfur sing at the window, and he supposed that the latter had left the herdsman unable to help himself. He therefore ordered his servants to search for Skeljúngur, but they could not find him, as the night was very dark. Early in the morning, the farmer started off with his men to search again for him. They discovered the place where Lágálfur and Skeljúngur had fought, by the trodden ground, and the stones which had been kicked up by their feet, but of the man himself they could find nothing.

After a little time people began to be aware that Skeljúngur did not lie quiet in death, and that he was a goblin, and now lived in the mountain close to Silfrastadir. And it became dangerous to pass through the valley, for he used to kill the horses of travellers, and their dogs, and mislead themselves. But Thorgrímur received the worst harm of all from him; for his herdsman was killed the following Christmas, and the same fatal thing took place till the third Christmas.

Now the story returns to Greenland again. Grímur the Icelander had lived there in all happiness with the good farmer and his family all this time. He had learnt many things, and excelled everybody in bravery and skill.

Once in the last spring the old farmer came to him and said to him, "This night I have seen many visions, and I suppose that your father is in hard need of you, for his herdsman has become a dangerous goblin, destroying his property and killing his servants, and I tell you that you are the only man capable of killing this monster. Now you shall make ready to return to Iceland, and I will give you a little ship for the voyage, in which Grímur, my son, and Ingibjörg, my daughter, shall accompany you. I see that your lines of fate lie together, and on your arrival in Iceland, you will marry your sister Ingibjörg to my son Grímur. He will bring her hither, but will return again to Iceland, where they will rear their family. Your fortune, however, will lead you away from your native land; but in whatever company you move, you will always be the foremost and best. And now I will equip you for your journey as well as I can."

Grímur the Icelander thanked the old man for his kind gifts, and promised to follow his advice.

When the ice had disappeared, the young men prepared their vessel for their voyage, and the farmer gave them everything they required, of the best quality. To the Icelander he gave many rarities, and, among others, the troll's spear which they had found in the cave, and, as he delivered it into his hand, said, "I think this will wear through many a rough combat."

After this the old Grímur bade farewell to his children

and to his future son-in-law, and wished them God-speed. So they weighed anchor and sailed away into the Greenland sea, and a long and rough passage they had, between the stormy weather and the ice, but at last they came safely into harbour in the mouth of the river Blanda, two days before Christmas.

The Icelander said, "I will ride as speedily as possible northwards to Silfrastadir, and I shall be none too early; but do you wait by the ship till my return."

So he procured two of the best riding-horses in the neighbourhood, and rode, dressed in glittering armour and carrying the troll's spear, along Blanda up through Vatnsskard. The snow had drifted, and the roads were heavy, but he rode so fast that, as the tale goes, one of his horses died in the middle of the journey, and the other by the wall of the grass-field of Silfrúnarstadir.

When he arrived there it was Christmas-eve, and the day far spent, and he went in to his father, who received him with great joy. Then he went to the family-room and threw off his riding-dress. He saw that all the people of the household looked sorrowful, and as he knew what was the cause of their sadness, he questioned them about Skeljúngur's habits. They told him that all night this goblin used to sit outside of the sleeping-room roof, kicking his heels into it, and that he was so dangerous, that no one dared go out after nightfall.

Grímur saw lying on the floor the fresh skin of the ox

which had been killed for the Christmas feast, so he took it and cut out of it three strong ropes, and after that went out of the house, and directed his steps southward, carrying the spear in one hand, the ropes in the other, till he came to a mound called, after him, Grímshóll, where he found a stone standing on the south side, broad at the bottom and narrow at the top. Grímur went to it, and pierced three holes through it with his spear. Into these holes he put the three ropes, and made, by means of loops, three nooses, which could be drawn tight against the stone. This accomplished, he returned home, where a merry Christmas feast awaited him, for every one was glad of his return, and none more so than his father. As the night advanced, Grímur begged all the people to go to bed.

The servant men of the farm slept in a dormitory near the entrance, where there were many beds. Grímur lay down on the bed nearest the door, wrapped up in the fresh ox-skin from which he had cut the cords, and through the head of which he could see the door. One lamp was burning in the room, and Grímur told all the others to be neither afraid nor troubled if anyone should come unceremoniously into the house. Every one, with silent dread, expected Skeljúngur, and thus, in perfect quiet, some part of the night was spent.

After midnight some one was heard to mount on to the house and ride astride of the dormitory roof, kicking his heels with such fury that every rafter cracked again.

Then this house-rider jumped down, and, coming to the door, kicked it open.

Skeljúngur (for it was he) rolled his horrible eyes round the room, till none of the men could move for fear. When he saw that there was a new sleeper in the room, he went up to the bed nearest the door and caught hold of the ox-skin, but Grímur held it so tight that the other could not move it. Finding this, the other pulled with all his strength; but Grímur put his foot against the wainscot, and pushed against him till he broke the wainscot down. Then in their struggle they arrived at the door; and Grímur, seeing that he could not resist Skeljúngur except by stratagem, lay on the skin and let the other drag him out, planting his feet, however, against everything that came in his way, and thus they came to the outer door. Skeljúngur dragged the skin from the door across the field, in a southerly direction, but Grímur made the dragging as difficult for him as he could by planting his feet against every hillock and every stone that they passed. Active as the goblin was, he now began to be tired, and at last they came to Grímshóll.

By this time the night was far advanced towards dawn, and Grímur fought then and there more fiercely than ever, contriving finally to bind him to the stone by means of the nooses which he had prepared. Having securely fastened Skeljúngur to the rock, he went home in order to procure fire and fuel for burning him.

But when he came back he found that both Skeljúngur and the stone had disappeared. He judged that the direction the goblin would have most probably taken with his load was a southerly one, down the slope of the mountain, so he followed that way. After a while he saw before him Skeljúngur dragging the great stone behind him with great difficulty. Then Grímur ran up to him and cut off his head, and, fetching the fire and fuel, burnt him there. After that he took his ashes to a well close by and threw them in, and, according to the current story, two fishes, covered with blue hair, sprung from them, and lived there until the Nordurá changed its course and swept over the well, when the fishes disappeared.

The stone, bound to which Skeljúngur lost his second life, is yet to be seen standing by the highway, sunk deep into the ground, and there is still one hole visible, which was pierced by the iron spear.

The poet Hjálmar Jónsson, who has written this story, asserts that he has seen, in his youth, two holes in the stone, the lower one of which was close to the surface of the earth. But this was forty years ago, and nobody can tell how large the stone may be.

On the spot where the goblin was burnt, was afterwards built a farm called Skeljúngsstadir, which is mentioned in Sturlúnga, for Eyólfur the Vehement rested there with his men when he attacked the Earl Gissur at Flugumýri.

Skeljúngshellir, or the cave of Skeljúngur, is also to be found in the adjacent mountain.

Now we will return to Grímur, who went home after this struggle very weary. Everybody in the farm thanked him with fair words for the riddance he had made, and everybody agreed that no one was his equal in all Skagafjördur. Now he told his father about his journey to Greenland, and mentioned all the conditions he had made with his Greenland friends, asking him frankly to consent to them, for that he had to thank those men for his preservation; nor, declared he, would his sister be better off with any husband than with Grímur the Greenlander.

Thorgrímur said that all their agreements should stand unbroken. "And my daughter," he continued, "shall go with your friend to Greenland, for I know that they will return and settle in Iceland to rear their family around them."

Grímur thanked his father for his kind answer, and his sister's departure from home was prepared for with all possible liberality, and both her father and brother accompanied her to the vessel lying in the mouth of the Blanda. Thorgrímur gave her a large number of gold and silver ornaments, and to Grímur the Greenlander a new body of sailors, sending also with him gifts for the old man in Greenland. Then they parted in affection, and when

Thorgrímur kissed his daughter at farewell, he wept tears of fatherly love.

With a fair wind, Grímur the Greenlander and his bride sailed away.

Thorgrímur and his son rode northwards to Silfrastadir, taking with them Ingibjörg of Greenland, who was looked upon as very beautiful, and who made a right good wife; for, a short time after this, Grímur married her, and their marriage was a happy one. It was soon found that Grímur, after his struggle with the goblin, had become very irritable, and it was impossible for his neighbours to agree with him; so they induced him to go south, to Borgar-fjördur, but having dwelt a short time there, he sailed from Iceland with his wife Ingibjörg, and settled in Sweden, where he raised up a family, and none of his descendants are known to have come to Iceland.

And where he dwelt he became celebrated for his bravery.

People say that Grímur the Greenlander returned to Iceland with his wife Ingibjörg, and settled at Skaga, between Skagafjördur and Húnaflóa.

His son was Thorgrímur, the Weatherwise, who lived at Keta.

His son was Grímur, who lived at Hafnir.

His son again was Grímur, who lived there after his father's death, at the time when Thorgerdur Kolka came

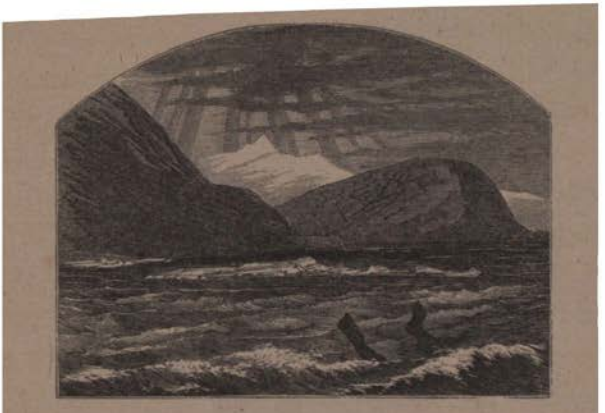
from Hornstrandir and built the farm called Kolkunes, trusting herself to Grímur's honour.

The priest Eyólfur of Vellir mentions her in his "Antiquarian Transactions" as a benevolent woman, and one of great account, and says that at her death a miraculous earthquake took place, doing much damage, both at Skaga and at other places, and swallowing up the farm Gullbrekka, with all its inhabitants and cattle.

And there is now a great slough where the farm formerly stood.

And thus ends the story of Grímur, who killed Skeljúngur.

MISCELLANEOUS.



THE STORY OF JÓN ASMUNDSSON.

IN the district of Boyarfjördur, once lived a poor married couple. The man's name was Asmundur. They had many children, whose names have not been handed down to us, except that of the eldest, and he was called Jón. At this time, so severe a season was prevailing, that Asmundur was obliged to leave his home and his children, who were scattered about the country and brought up, one here and one there, at the houses of various farmers.

Now there lived at Reykjavík a priest, named Christján, and he it was that took Jón into his house, and brought him up as his own son. Jón grew into a fine and handsome lad, and was stronger than any of his fellows. But

he was always very quiet, and seldom opened his mouth, unless first spoken to. He was, moreover, hardworking and willing, and became before long a great favourite, not only with the priest himself, but with every member of the household.

One summer, according to yearly custom, a trading vessel arrived at Reykjavík. Its owner was a foreign merchant, who carried on a large business at this season; but of his name no mention is made. Among other people with whom he had dealings was Christján, the priest. One day while Christján was on board the ship, it fell out that they came to talk about strong men. The merchant, being himself well-built and powerful, went up to where four barrels of rye lay bound together, and, seizing them by the rope which was round them, lifted them all together as high as his knee. When he had put them down again, he said, "There! let anyone prove himself my match in lifting, and I will give him three half-pounds of gold by weight."

When the priest returned home, he told his foster-son what he had seen, and how the merchant had promised three half-pounds of gold by weight to any man that should match him in lifting, and encouraged the boy to make the trial. To this Jón agreed without wasting many words. So they went together to the ship, and Christján told the captain that the lad would like to try his strength. The merchant pointed out the rye barrels to Jón, who,

going up to them, lifted them on to his shoulder as if they were but a handful of feathers, and when he had walked with them to and fro upon the deck, put them down again in their place.

When he saw this, the merchant changed colour, but weighed out the three half-pounds of gold, and paid them over to Jón, begging him, as he took leave, to come and pay him one more visit on board the ship before he sailed away. This Jón promised to do.

One day, shortly before the time the merchant had fixed for sailing, the priest came to Jón, and reminded him of his promise to visit the ship. Accordingly Jón went, and Christján with him, and the merchant received them with all due honour, begging Jón to come with him into the cabin for a few words he wished to say in his ear.

But when he saw that the priest was going to make one of their party, he turned round to him, and said, "Friend, you can stay up here a while; we have no need of you."

Christján, however, was not to be put off, but assuring the merchant that he would not disturb them, or be in their way, followed them down into the cabin.

Then the merchant said to Jón, "You have not yet done with me; for next year I shall bring with me a boy for you to wrestle with, and if you get the better of him in that game, I will weigh you out five pounds of gold."

Jón agreed to this, and when he and Christján had taken leave, the merchant sailed away.

For some time everything went on quietly, and the winter set in. One day the priest asked Jón whether he remembered the agreement he had made with the foreign merchant before his departure.

Jón answered, that it was so slight a matter that he had never yet given it a thought.

But the priest said, "Indeed it is no such child's play as you think; for the boy that this merchant will bring for you to wrestle with, is none other than a fiendish and monstrous black man, and get the better of you he surely will, unless you employ craft against him. I will find out speedily some means for gaining you the victory, for ere three weeks of the summer be over the merchant-ship will come into harbour."

Jón nodded, but said nothing, and seemed in no way troubled by the news; nor did he give himself the least pains about it till the time came.

Before three weeks of the summer were over, as Christján had foretold, a vessel was seen making for the harbour of Reykjavík from the open ocean. It was no sooner in sight than the priest went to Jón, and, warning him of what he now might expect, dressed him in a peasant's frock of black wool, and clasped a belt round his waist; when he had thus equipped him, he gave him a little, bright, sharp-edged dagger, which he bade him keep ready

to his hand, hidden in the sleeve of the woollen frock. He further told Jón, not to attempt to resist the negro's attacks, as the latter would fling him easily over his shoulder.

"I," said he, "will take good care that you fall on your feet. But, after a while, challenge the negro to take off his shaggy mantle, and do you make ready in your hand the dagger, that when he rushes upon you a second time you may thrust it into his chest."

The anchor was scarcely dropped before a boat sped from the vessel, and set on shore a black man of giant's build, dressed in a shaggy mantle, who, directly he saw the priest and the lad standing close to the sea, rushed at Jón, and, seizing him in his arms, flung him like a pebble over his head, high into the air. But the boy fell on his feet, and forthwith challenged the black to fight without his woolly mantle, that they might the more easily try their skill in wrestling. To this the negro consented; but while he was doffing his cloak, Jón made ready in his right hand the sharp-edged dagger which the priest had given him, and when the other ran blindly upon him, thrust it into his breast once and again. But yet they wrestled together for a while, and assuredly even now Jón would have got the worst of it, were it not that his black woollen frock served him as armour against the heavy blows of the negro.

At last the fight came to an end, and Jón slew his enemy.

Then he and Christján went on board the vessel, where they found the merchant, and saluted him.

"Well," said the latter, "and how went the fight?"

The priest answered, "If you will look towards the shore, you will see the negro lying dead close to the waves. That is how the fight went."

Then the merchant was exceeding wroth, and said, "Aha! you have not acted like brave and true-hearted men. This lad has but fought by craft and with steel."

"But," replied the priest, "however that may be, he has deserved fairly the prize; for, whereas you promised to bring a lad to wrestle with him, you have brought an evil-souled, giant-built black."

To this the merchant had no answer ready, so, as needs must be, paid into Jón's hand the five pounds of weighed-out gold, which he had promised to the winner in the wrestling. Then, smoothing his angry brows, he begged Jón to come and see him once more before the ship sailed, which would be in the latter end of the summer.

Everything went on as usual till a short time before the merchant had determined to sail from Reykjavík, and then the priest reminded Jón of his promise to visit the merchant before his departure, offering at the same time to accompany him, and be present during the interview. They went, therefore, to the vessel and greeted the merchant, who received them with great politeness, but, as before, begged Jón to go a little aside with him, as he had some-

thing particular to tell him. Christján, however, followed close upon their heels, and the merchant, seeing him, said, "You need not trouble yourself to come so close; what we speak about has nought to do with you."

But the priest was not to be put off so, and saying, "I will neither leave the side of my foster-son, nor will I interrupt your converse," kept still close to them.

Then the merchant said to Jón, "Next summer I will bring with me a little whelp against which you shall try your strength, and if you get the best of the fight, I will weigh out into your hand seven-and-a-half pounds of good gold."

Upon this they parted; Jón and Christján returning on shore, and the merchant sailing away.

Now the summer passed away, and a great part of the winter passed away without Jón making any preparations for, or saying a word about, the next visit of the merchant.

One day the priest asked him whether or no he remembered the merchant's words and promise.

"Not I," replied Jón.

"But," said the priest, "this visit of his will bring almost as much difficulty as his last one. The whelp he promised to match against you, ere half a month of the summer be past, is nothing less than a large and cruel deer-hound, and to get the best of the fight we must devise some wile, for your strength will be as nothing."

But Jón only answered, "Devise, then, for me," and there he let the matter rest, occupying himself no further about it.

Ere half a month of the summer was over, a vessel appeared in sight, sailing from the open sea towards Reykjavík.

Then the priest went to Jón and said, "The merchant will now soon be in harbour, and you must be ready for him." And he made him put on again the black woollen frock which he had now woven through and through with links of iron. He gave him, at the same time, a spear, with moveable barbs, which would spread out and tear the flesh into which they had been thrust, and, placing on the point of this a piece of meat, bade Jón watch his chance and thrust it with all his strength down the dog's throat.

When he had thus equipped him he led him down to the shore.

Scarcely was the anchor dropped, when a boat sped from the vessel, and placed upon the beach a large and evil-eyed deer-hound, who, directly he saw Jón advancing towards him, rushed at him with mad fury, and would have torn him to pieces on the spot had not the frock, with its links of mail, saved Jón from his teeth. Over and over again the brute rushed upon him, each time with greater rage and strength. But Jón, who escaped unscathed from each attack, watched his chance, and keeping

the piece of meat always before the dog till the beast opened its mouth to snap at it, thrust it with all his force down its throat, till, in a short while, it lay dead at his feet.

Then they went out to the ship and saluted the merchant, who received and returned their greeting surlily enough. But feign and conceal as he would, he could not hide from them the wrathful red blood that filled his cheek and brow and swelled his lip.

"We have come to claim the gold," said the priest; "my foster-son has fairly earned it."

"Fairly, forsooth!" replied the merchant. "He has fought like a brave man in truth, by wile and craft and steel. He has no claim to the gold, he has not kept to our agreement."

"Neither have you," the priest returned, "for you promised to bring a whelp, and have brought a wild beast to match it against this lad." So the merchant, who could not deny this, put the smoothest face he could upon the matter and weighed into Jón's hand the gold. Just before Jón and the priest left the ship, the merchant begged the former to come once more to see him before he weighed anchor and sailed away at the summer's end. Jón promised to come.

Now the time came round at which the merchant had fixed to sail, and Christján reminded Jón of his promise to go once more and visit him, saying, at the same time, that

he himself would take good care to be present at their meeting. Accordingly they went on board the ship, whose anchor was even now being weighed. Just as before, the merchant begged Jón to come down with him into the cabin, as he had something particular to say to him, and when he saw Christján following them, turned round to him with a fierce look and cried, "Stand back, and meddle not where nothing concerns you."

"I do not wish to meddle," said the priest, "but I will not leave my foster-son." And as he seemed firm about this the merchant said no more; so they went all three down to the cabin.

Then the merchant took down from one of the shelves a book, out of which he pulled a leaf and waved it quickly before Jón's eyes, as if to prevent the priest from seeing its contents. But Christján caught a glance of some of the words written upon it, without the merchant's knowledge. Then he returned the leaf to the book and the book to its place, saying to Jón, "If you do not bring me next summer, when I come back here, the book from which this leaf was taken, I will brand you as a fool and a faint heart; but if you bring the book I will weigh you out fifteen full pounds of good gold."

With these words they parted, Jón and Christján going home, and the merchant putting at once to sea.

When one week of the summer was still left, the priest asked Jón whether he had yet given a thought to the task

with which the merchant had charged him for the next year.

Jón answered that it had never entered his head.

Then the other asked him whether he had known the leaf that the merchant had shown him, but Jón said, "No."

"No wonder," answered Christján, "for it was none other than a leaf from the devil's manual, which the merchant has bidden you bring him, and this is surely no slight or easy matter. But I have a brother who is a priest in the worlds below, and who is the only man that can help you to procure this book. Make yourself ready, therefore, at once for the journey, for you must spend with him in the lower regions the whole winter, from the first day to the last."

So Jón addressed himself to his journey, and when he was all ready for starting, the priest gave him a letter to his brother down below, and a ball of thread which would run before him and guide him. When he wished him God-speed, he warned him most strictly never once to look back on the way, and never to utter a single word the whole winter through. The youth promised, saying, he thought this surely easy enough.

Bidding his friend and foster-father, Christján, farewell, he flung down on the ground the ball of thread, keeping one end in his hand, and it ran quickly along before him, he following and never looking back. After a while they came to a mountain which lay north of Reykjavík, and in

which appeared a passage leading deep into the earth. Into this the ball ran. Soon it became so dark, and the passage so rough and difficult, that more than once Jón stopped, doubting whether to go any further or to turn back. But every time he paused the ball pulled so hard that he was encouraged to go on, and still followed it in spite of difficulties. Thus, for a long way, they went on, till all at once the place became light, and Jón saw lying before him a vast and charming green plain over which the ball still rolled till it came to a farm as big as a town, and stopped at the door of one of the houses, where Jón picked it up from the ground. At this door Jón knocked, and a girl came out, neatly and plainly dressed, and of modest mien, and, as Jón thought, the most winsome he had ever seen. Jón nodded to her, and gave her the letter, which she took without speaking, as well as the ball of thread, and went with them into the house, leaving Jón standing at the door. In a few minutes she came back, and with her another girl younger than herself, who looked hard at Jón, and turned back into the house. But the other took him by the hand and led him through some passages into a room, where stood one small table, one chair, a bench, and a bed.

In this room Jón lived for a long time, till he thought the winter must be far advanced. He saw no one but the young girl, who came every day into the room, brought him his meals, and made his bed, but never spoke to him,

"Soon it became so dark, and the passage so rough, that Jón stopped, doubting whether to go any further."

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nor did he, the whole time, hear the sound of a human voice.

One day, however, there entered the room a tall and handsome man, dressed in a long black cassock. This was the brother of Christján, the priest in the infernal world. He bade Jón good-day in a sweet and courteous voice, but Jón merely nodded in reply.

Then the other asked him if he knew how long he had, by this time, remained in the worlds below.

But Jón was still silent, and only shook his head.

The priest then said to him, "You have done well to keep so long and so firmly silent. But you may speak now, as the winter is over, and this is the first day of summer. Your task is accomplished, for here is the book you came to seek. Take care of it, and give it safely into my brother's hands. You must start hence to-day, as the merchant will arrive before a week of the summer be fully past. The owner of this book will miss it just about the same time, and claim it first from the merchant's hands. Therefore bid my brother buy every scrap of the merchandise on board the ship, and beware to land it before he delivers the volume into the captain's hands. Be bearer, too, of my love to my brother. My daughter shall go with you to point out the way." And with these words he took leave of him.

Then the girl who had served Jón all the winter, came to him and led him from the house, and they walked on

sadly, holding one another by the hand. What they talked about now that Jón's tongue was loosed, nobody knows. However, at last the girl stopped and said she could go no further, as it was now easy enough for him to find his own way home. And these were her last words, "Now we must part, though it go nigh to break our hearts for sorrow. We cannot live together, for neither can you dwell here below, nor I in the world above. But, in the course of some months, I shall bear you a child. If it be a boy, I will send it you when it is six years old; but if a girl, when it is twelve. I pray you, receive it well." She then gave him the ball of thread. And when she had embraced him, with many tears, left him.

He, sad at heart, flung down the ball, which rolled before him, leading him this time, not through dark and difficult caverns, but along such a smooth and smiling country, that Jón knew not when he had left the one world and entered the other. Towards the close of the first week in summer he arrived at Reykjavík and was received joyfully by Christján, to whom he gave the book, and his brother's love and message.

The very next day the merchant arrived in harbour, and he had no sooner dropped anchor than the priest hurried on board and saluted him, but their greetings were just about as warm and cordial as the north-east wind. These over, the priest told him that, as a harsh and severe season had just prevailed and provisions were scant all through

the near country, he wished to buy the whole stock that lay on board, and land it at once. They soon came to an agreement, and in a few days all the merchandise was landed.

No sooner was the last bale on shore than Christján and Jón went on board the vessel. When they had saluted, the merchant immediately asked Jón how he had succeeded in fulfilling the task wherewith he had been charged.

"Pretty well," said Jón.

Then Christján gave the book to the merchant, in the name of Jón, and mightily astonished the man was when he saw that it was the right one, but paid out the gold at the priest's request without saying any more about it. This Jón took, and after they had bidden adieu to the merchant, he and Christján jumped into their own boat and rowed quickly to shore.

But they had no sooner stepped out on to the beach, than the sea became, all at once, rough and stormy, and when they looked towards the merchant's vessel, lo! it was no more to be seen. The devil had claimed his manual.

After this they returned to the priest's house, where no small wealth was now stored up, and Jón stayed there for another half-year. Always quiet and reserved, he was tenfold more so since his return from the lower worlds. At the end of that time the priest, who had noted the youth's melancholy, taxed him with having fallen in love with one of the daughters of his brother, the priest in the subterranean

world. But to this Jón made no reply. Then Christján went on to offer him one of his own daughters (he had three, whose names we know not), whichever he loved the best, as a wife, thinking that this would perhaps free him from the thrall of his sadness. Jón chose the youngest of the three, and the priest married them, and giving his daughter no mean marriage present, settled them in a neighbouring farm, which could boast of the best land for many a long mile round.

Here they lived for many years in unbroken love and great prosperity, and had not a few children, but never the whole time did Jón bate one jot of his sadness.

At the end of twelve years, it happened one day that, as all the household were assembled in the family-room, a knock was heard at the door. Jón sent one of his sons, a lad about six years old, to the door to see who was there. The child returned, saying that there stood outside a little girl of wonderful beauty, who had asked him sweetly to say in the house that she wished to speak to her father.

At these words, it was as if a ray of sunshine had passed across Jón's face. He rose from his seat and ran eagerly to the outer door. The little girl, directly she saw him, ran up to him, and throwing her arms round his neck, kissed him fondly, calling him her own dear father. Jón returned her embrace with the greatest joy and love. She told him that her mother, the daughter of the priest in the worlds below, had sent her to him, bearing her sweetest love. Jón took the child by the hand and led her in to

his wife, to whom he told the whole story of her parentage, begging her at the same time, as she loved him, so to treat the little girl as one of her own. The woman, being of true heart, welcomed the child with open arms and became a fond mother to her, from that day forth. They called her Sigrídur, and she grew up among them, a sister to the other children, and was lovelier by far and by far more accomplished than any girl of her own age, round about for many a stretch of long miles.

At the end of three years, Sigrídur, whose beauty was in everybody's mouth, asked her father's leave to pay her mother a visit in the worlds below. Jón granted it willingly, telling her that, if she would, she might stay a whole year with her mother, and making her the bearer of his sweetest love.

The year over, Sigrídur came back and was welcomed with delight by her father and all the family. She told Jón that she brought him her mother's dying farewell, together with the message that he himself had but one month more to live. Far from being grieved by this news, Jón seemed glad, and for the whole month no one noticed any change in his conduct, except that his heart was lighter than heretofore.

At last Jón made a settlement of all he possessed, giving by far the greater part of his property to Sigrídur, and his personal wealth to his wife and other children, who were well off with it. And every one thus saw that he

was most fond of his daughter from the lower regions; and what, all things considered, was the wonder? When Jón died, many felt deeply his loss and wept bitterly for him; for he had been a good man and a warm friend.

Some years afterwards Sigrídur married a young and hopeful peasant, and their farm throve till none in the district could compare with it. They lived happily and everybody looked up to them with respect and fondness. Of their many children the descendants are scattered widely through the south country.

The Money-Chest.

It happened, once upon a time, that a large party of men were travelling together, and pitched their tent, early one Sunday morning, on the fresh sward of a fair green meadow. The weather was bright and warm, and the men being tired with their night's journey, and having tethered their horses, fell asleep, side by side, all round the inside of the tent. One of them, however, who happened to be lying nearest the door, could not, in spite of his fatigue, succeed in getting to sleep, so lay idly watching the other sleepers. As he looked round he discovered a small cloud of pale-blue vapour moving over the head of the man who was sleeping in the innermost part of the tent. Astonished at this he sat up, and at the same

moment the cloud flitted out of the tent. Being curious to know what it could be and what would become of it, he jumped up softly, and, without awaking the others, stole out into the sunshine. On looking round he saw the vapour floating slowly over the meadow, so set himself to follow it. After a while it stopped over where lay the blanched skull of a horse upon the grass, in and about which hummed and buzzed a cloud of noisy blue flies. Into this the vapour entered among the flies. After staying a while, it came out, and took its course over the meadow till it came to a little thread of a rivulet, which hurried through the grass. Here it seemed to be at a loss how to get over the water, and moved restlessly and impatiently up and down the side of it, till the man laid his whip, which he happened to have with him, over it, the handle alone being sufficient to bridge it across. Over this the vapour passed and moved on till it came to a small hillock, into which it disappeared. The man stood by and waited for it to come out again, which it soon did, and returned by the same way as that by which it had come. The man laid his whip as before across the stream and the vapour crossed upon the handle. Then it moved on towards the tent, which it entered, and the man who had followed it saw it hover for a minute over the head of the sleeper, where he had first seen it, and disappear. After this he lay down again, and went to sleep himself.

When the day was far spent and the sun was going

down, the men rose, struck the tent, and made preparations for beginning their journey again. While they were packing, and loading the horses, they talked on various things, and, among others, on money.

"Bless me!" said the man who had slept in the innermost part of the tent, "I wish I had what I saw in my dream to-day."

"What was your dream, and what did you see?" asked the man who had followed the vapour.

The other replied, "I dreamt that I walked out from the tent, and across the meadow till I came to a large and beautiful building, into which I went. There I found many people at revel in a vast and noble hall, singing, dancing, and making merry. I stayed some time among them, and when I left them and stepped out from the hall, I saw stretched before me a vast plain of fair green sward. Over this I walked for some time, till I came to an immensely broad and turbulent river, over which I wished to cross, but could find no means of doing so. As I was walking up and down the bank thinking how I could possibly get over it, I saw a mighty giant greater than any I had ever heard of, come towards me, holding in his hand the trunk of a large tree, which he laid across the river. Thus I was able to get easily to the other side. The river once passed, I walked straight on for a long time till I came to a high mound which lay open. I went into it, thinking to find wonderful treasures, but found

only a single chest, which, however, was so full of money that I could neither lift it, nor, though I spent hours over it, count the quarter of its contents. So I gave it up and bent my steps hither again. The giant flung his tree across the river as before, and I came to the tent and went to sleep from sheer weariness."

At hearing this, the other who had followed the vapour was mightily pleased, and, laughing to himself, said, "Come, my good fellow, let us fetch the money. If one could not count it, no doubt two can."

"Fetch the money!" replied the man. "Are you mad? Do you forget that I only *dreamed* about it? Where would you fetch it from?"

But as the other seemed really earnest and determined, he consented to go with him.

So they took the same course as the vapour had taken, and when they came to the skull, "There is your hall of revel," said the man who had followed the mist some hours before.

"And there," he said, when they stopped over the rivulet, "is your broad and turbulent river, and here the trunk the giant threw over it as a bridge." With these words he showed him his whip.

The other was filled with amazement, and when they came to the mound, and having dug a little way into it, really and truly discovered a heavy chest full of golden pieces, his astonishment was not a whit the less. On

their way back to the tent with the treasure, his companion told him all about the matter.

Whether they complained of the weight of the money-chest or gave up counting its contents in despair, this history relateth not.

The Black School.

Once upon a time, there existed somewhere in the world, nobody knows where, a school which was called the Black School. There the pupils learned witchcraft and all sorts of ancient arts. Wherever this school was, it was somewhere below ground, and was held in a strong room which, as it had no window, was eternally dark and changeless. There was no teacher either, but everything was learnt from books with fiery letters, which could be read quite easily in the dark. Never were the pupils allowed to go out into the open air or see the daylight during the whole time they stayed there, which was from five to seven years. By then they had gained a thorough and perfect knowledge of the sciences to be learnt. A shaggy grey hand came through the wall every day with the pupils' meals, and when they had finished eating and drinking took back the horns and platters. But one of the rules of the school was, that the owner should keep for himself that one of the students who should leave the

school the last every year. And, considering that it was pretty well known among the pupils that the devil himself was the master, you may fancy what a scramble there was at each year's end, everybody doing his best to avoid being last to leave the school.

It happened once that three Icelanders went to this school, by name Sœmundur the learned, Kálfur Arnason, and Hálfdán Eldjárnsson; and as they all arrived at the same time, they were all supposed to leave at the same time. Sœmundur declared himself willing to be the last of them, at which the others were much lightened in mind. So he threw over himself a large mantle, leaving the sleeves loose and the fastenings free. A staircase led from the school to the upper world, and when Sœmundur was about to mount this the devil grasped at him and said, "You are mine!" But Sœmundur slipped out of the mantle and made off with all speed, leaving the devil the empty cloak. However, just as he left the school the heavy iron door was slammed suddenly to, and wounded Sœmundur on the heels. Then he said, "That was pretty close upon my heels," which words have since passed into a proverb. Thus Sœmundur contrived to escape from the Black School, with his companions, scot-free.

Some people relate, that, when Sœmundur came into the doorway, the sun shone upon him and threw his shadow on to the opposite wall; and as the devil stretched out his hand to grapple with him, Sœmundur said, "I am not the

last; do you not see who follows me?" So the devil seized the shadow, mistaking it for a man, and Sœmundur escaped with a blow on his heels from the iron door.

But from that hour he was always shadowless, for whatever the devil took, he never gave back again.

Sœmundur leaves the Black School.

When Sœmundur was abroad, and while he stayed in the Black School, he forgot all about himself and his family, on account of the many wonderful things he saw and learned. He forgot, at the same time, his own name, and so all his companions in the school called him "Buft."

One night, as Sœmundur was asleep, he dreamed that Bogi Einasson came to him and said, "Surely you act ill, Sœmundur, in entering this school, in forgetting your God, in giving yourself up to witchcraft, and in losing your Christian name. If you care aught for your future welfare, it is time for you to return."

"That I cannot by any means manage to do," said Sœmundur.

"More fool you," said Bogi, "for entering a school that you cannot leave at your pleasure. However, if you are willing to return home, I know how you can contrive it."

Sœmundur answered, "You know everything, Bogi; we are all children to you in wisdom. Yes, I am willing enough to return."

Then Bogi said, "Take my advice, and when you leave the school, throw your cloak loosely over your shoulders. As you go out somebody will grasp at you, but slip out of the cloak and make the best of your way off. You have most to fear the schoolmaster, for not long after you are gone he will miss you. But when you are fairly on your way, take off the shoe from your right foot, and fill it with blood, and carry it on your head all the rest of the first day. In the evening the schoolmaster will observe the stars, in whose movements and aspects he is right well skilled, and seeing round yours a bloody halo, will think that you are killed. Next day as you travel, you must fill your shoe with salt and water and carry it on your head. During the day he will not trouble himself about you; but at night he will again examine the stars, and, seeing round yours a watery halo, will imagine that you are drowned in the sea. On the third day you must open a vein in your side and let the blood from it trickle into your shoe. Then you must mix some earth with it, and carry the shoe on your head, as you travel, all the rest of the day. In the evening when the master examines the stars, he will see round yours an earthy and blood-stained halo, and will suppose that you are dead and buried. But afterwards he will find out that you are alive and well, and will wonder

at your cunning, and pride himself on having been the means of your learning so much wisdom. And the end of it will be, that he will cease persecuting you, and rather wish you well than otherwise."

With these words, Bogi Einasson left him.

And after all, it was in that very way that Sœmundur left the Black School, and returned safely to his own country.

Sœmundur gets the Living of Oddi.

As Sœmundur, Kálfur, and Hálfdán were returning from the Black School, they heard that the living of Oddi was vacant. So they all hurried to the king, and each asked it for himself. The king, well knowing with whom he had to deal, promised it to him who should be the first to reach the place. Upon this Sœmundur immediately called the devil to him and said, "Swim with me on your back, to Iceland; and if you bring me to shore without wetting the skirt of my coat, you shall have me for your own." The devil agreed to this, so he changed himself into a seal and swam off with Sœmundur on his back. On the way Sœmundur amused himself by reading the book of the Psalms of David. Before very long they came close to the coast of Iceland. When he saw this he closed the book and smote the seal with it upon the head,

so that it sank, and Sœmundur swam to land. And as, when Sœmundur got to shore, the skirts of his coat were wet, the devil lost the bargain, but the former got the living.

The Fly.

The devil did not forget either this or any other of Sœmundur's tricks upon him, and constantly looked out for a chance of doing him a bad turn. Many and many a time he tried to revenge himself upon him, but always in vain. One day he turned himself into a very small fly, and hid himself under the skin of the milk in the porringer, hoping this way to get into the stomach of Sœmundur the learned, and kill him. But no sooner had Sœmundur lifted his porringer to drink out of it than he saw the fly, and wrapping it up in the skin of the milk, he put it into a bladder, and placed the bladder on the altar in the church. So there the fly was obliged to stay till Sœmundur had finished performing the next service, which took a long time. And it is confidently told that the devil never enjoyed himself less in all his life. When service was over, Sœmundur undid the bladder and set the devil free.

Kalf Arnason.

When Kalf Arnason was in the Black School, he made a present of himself, it is said, to the devil. But when he got back to Iceland, he began to think that his promise was, after all, neither agreeable nor convenient, and puzzled himself to no purpose to find some way of escape from its fulfilment. At last he bethought himself of Sœmundur the learned, and determined to ask his counsel on so knotty a point.

When Kalf had stated his difficulty, Sœmundur advised him as follows: "Let one of your bull-calves live, and call it 'Arni;' after a while this one shall beget another, which you must call 'Kalf,' and then you will have 'Kalf Arnason.'"

The other took his advice, and in course of time the devil came to claim the fulfilment of the bargain, saying, "I want Kalf Arnason."

"Oh, with all my heart," said the man; "what objection can there possibly be to that?"

And forthwith went and fetched the second calf, which he presented to the devil, saying, "There, you have Kalf Arnason."

As the devil could not deny this, he must needs put up with it, though he grumbled at being played so

shabby a trick. So off he went without Kalf Arnason, who died a natural death, at a high age.

Other things are related of Priest Sœmundur the learned, and how he died, triumphing, as usual, over the devil; but those we repeat not here.

Bishop Sveinn the Sapient.

This is a story of second-sight. Sveinn the Sapient was one of the bishops of Skálholt, and was considered to be a man of more than ordinary learning, and moreover gifted with prophetic powers. Some people used to declare that he understood the language of the ravens, but others that the ravens with whom he held intercourse were neither more nor less than spirits under that disguise. Many years before he came into his bishopric, and while he was still a pastor, it happened once that he was sent from Skálholt to perform the service at another and distant church, and took with him a lad named Erlendur Erlendsson. On the way they were overtaken by so heavy a storm of snow, that they were unable to ride against it, and therefore dismounted and stood by their horses.

After a while the lad began to despair, and said piteously that he thought they should never leave the place alive.

But the bishop chid him for his cowardice, and bade

him behave like a man. "For," said he, "our lives will be mightily changed when I am Bishop of Skálholt, and you have married the daughter of Thorvardur the wealthy, at Mödruvellir."

Erlendur answered, "That you may become Bishop of Skálholt is, I know, no such unlikely thing; but that I, poor as I am, shall ever have a chance of marrying so rich a lady, is quite out of the question."

"Never doubt the possibility of God's gifts," returned the bishop, "for what I have told you will surely come to pass. And this shall be the sign that my words are true; when you ride to fetch your bride, there shall suddenly fall such a shower of rain, that its like for heaviness shall not be within the memory of any man."

Towards morning the storm ceased, and Sveinn and the lad remounted their horses and rode on to the end of their journey.

Now, after years had gone by, it came to pass that Sveinn was made Bishop of Skálholt, and that Erlendur Erlendsson became an accomplished man, and married the daughter of Thorvardur the wealthy, at Mödruvellir. And, as he rode to fetch his bride on a bright warm day, and was close to the grass-field of the farm at which she lived, suddenly there fell such a shower of rain, that even the driest places were immediately under water. Then he remembered the words of Sveinn the Sapient.

"Looking towards the benches where the women were wont to sit, she saw there a human skeleton with long yellow hair!"

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The Skeleton in Hólar Church.

Once, on a winter evening, it happened that Jón Arason, Bishop of Hólar, wanted a book which he had left lying on the altar in the church, so called his household folk together, and asked which of them would do him the favour of fetching the book for him. They all shuddered at the idea, and all drew back, except one maid-servant, who declared herself quite willing to go, and not in the least afraid.

Now the bishop having enemies—as who has not?—had made a tunnel from his own house, which was called the Palace, underground to the church, with a view to being able, if need should ever be, to take sanctuary at a moment's notice, and unobserved.

Through this tunnel the maid went, having procured the keys of the church; but when she had taken the book from the altar, she determined not to go back through the tunnel, which she had found dismal and ghostly, but rather round the other way. So she walked down the church with the keys to the outer door; and looking towards the benches where the women were wont to sit, she saw there a human skeleton with long yellow hair! Amazed at this, but in no way frightened, she went up to the figure and said, "Who are you?"

Upon which the skeleton said, "I am a woman, and

have long been dead. But my mother cursed me so that I can never corrupt, and return to the dust whence I sprung. Now, therefore, my good girl, I entreat you to release me from this ban, if it lies in your power."

"But," answered the girl, "it does *not* lie in my power, as far as I now know. Tell me how I can help you."

Then the skeleton replied, "You must ask my mother to forgive me my faults, and to annul her curse; for she may very likely do for the living what she refuses to do for the dead. It is a rare thing indeed for the living to ask favours of the dead."

"Where is your mother, then?" asked the maiden.

"Oh," said the other, "she is here, there, and everywhere. Now, for example, she is yonder in the choir."

Then the maiden went through the door into the choir, and saw sitting there on one of the benches a wondrous ugly old woman in a red hat, to whom she addressed herself, asking her to be good enough to forgive her daughter, and remove from her the curse. After pausing a while, plainly unwilling, the old hag answered—"Well! it is not often that you living people ask favours of me, so for once I will say to you yea!"

Having thanked her for her goodness, the maiden went back towards the outer door, but when she came to the place where she had seen the skeleton, found there only

a heap of dust. So she went on towards the door, and as she opened it she heard a voice from the inner part of the church, which cried after her, "Look at my red eyes, how red they are!" And without looking round, she answered, "Look at my black back, how black it is!"

As soon as she had shut the door behind her, she found that the churchyard seemed to swarm with people who were shouting and screaming direfully, and who made as if they would stop her. But she, summoning up courage, rushed through the middle of them, without looking either to the right or to the left, and reached the home-building in safety.

As she delivered the book to the bishop, she said:

"So loud were the voices of the Goblin band
That five echoes for each were found
In the mountain-rocks, though far they stand
From Hólar burying-ground."

The Wizards in the Westmann Islands.

During the time when that dread pest, yclept the Black Death, raged through Iceland, eighteen sorcerers banded together, and went out to the Westmann Islands, in order to escape, as long as possible, the scourge. When, after a while, by means of their magic arts, they discovered that the plague was abating its fury, they were curious to know how many people were left alive in the country.

So they agreed to send one of their company to land, that he might find how matters stood, and make his report to the others. They chose for this errand a man who was neither first nor last in the knowledge of their arts; and when they put him ashore they told him that if he did not return to them by Christmas-day next, they would despatch a Sending to him who should kill him.

Far and wide wandered the man, north, south, and east, without finding a single living soul. All the dwellings stood wide open, and from floor to roof, even on threshold and on hill, lay the dead. At last he came to a house which was shut up, and through his wonder at this half hoped to find there still some signs of human life. He knocked loudly at the door, which was instantly opened, and there came out a young and beautiful damsel, who, half-wild with joy to see again a living man, answered his salutation by falling on his neck, and embracing him; telling him at the same time with many tears that she had thought herself the only living creature in the whole land.

She begged him to stay with her some time, which he consented to do, and they went into the house and held a vast deal of talk together. She asked him whence he came, and what was the object of his journey; and he told her all about the company of wizards, their desire to know how many people were left alive in the land, and their strict command to him to be back in the Westmann Islands

before next Christmas-day. But she begged for his company as long as he could possibly afford it her; and he, pitying her loneliness, agreed to stay with her some time. The girl told him, that within many and many a mile not one soul was left alive; for she had made a week's journey from home in all directions, hoping to find some one still living, but quite in vain.

So the man abode there, and Christmas-day drew nearer and nearer, until, at last, he felt bound to tell the girl that he must leave her now, or suffer the punishment of death for his disobedience to the commands of the other sorcerers. But the girl would not hear of his going so soon, and coaxed him to stay yet a little longer, saying, that surely his companions were not such unmerciful and heartless folks as to kill him for so slight a fault as staying with a poor lonely woman. By these words she quite overcame his determination to leave her till Christmas-eve came round. Then, said he, he truly must leave her as he valued his life. At first she tried to persuade him to stay with her by caresses and prayers; but finding him deaf to them, she changed her tone, and said, "Well, my good man, since you *will* go, go! and reach the Westmann Islands by Christmas-day if you can. I wish you luck in your journey, and somewhat more than common speed!" Then the man suddenly bethought himself that more than common speed must indeed be his, if he would make the journey in time; and so, knowing that it was totally use-

less for him to start now for the Westmann Islands, resolved to stay and await his death where he was. He passed the night in a sad state of mind; but the maiden, on the contrary, was as lively as lively could be, and asked him if he could now see what was going on among his companions. He said they had just rowed the Sending ashore from the islands. So she sat on the foot of the bed, which was near the door, and he lay behind her. After a while, he told her that he felt a strange heaviness come over him, which he knew to be owing to the magic arts of the wizards. Having told her this, he fell into a deep sleep.

By and by, the girl, who still sat at the bed's foot, woke him, and asked him if he knew now where the Sending was, or his way.

He said, "Within the bounds of the farm," and fell back again into a sleep so deep, that, shake him as she would, she could not rouse him from it.

When she had sat there a little while longer, she saw a brownish vapour enter the house through the open door. It glided softly towards her, and standing still before her, took the figure of a man. "Well," said the girl, "what do you want here?"

The Sending said to her, "I am sent hither by the wizards of the Westmann Islands to slay this man, who has broken his word to them—as one who knows not what truth is. Move, therefore, from the bed, for while you sit there I cannot reach him."

"All in good time," replied she. "But, first of all, you must do me some service."

The Sending asked what service she would of him. "Make yourself, for instance," she answered, "as large as you can."

This, he said, he would assuredly do, willingly enough. Accordingly he made himself so large that he quite filled the house.

"That will do," said the girl. "Now, for instance, make yourself as small as you can."

So the Sending shrunk down and down and down, till from a monstrous giant he became the smallest fly you ever saw.

"Aha," said she, and stuck him forthwith into an empty marrow-bone, which she had in her pocket, and corked him in.

Then putting the bone back in her pocket, she woke the man. He started up, wondering that he was yet alive, and she asked him where was now the Sending.

"I know not," said he; and she answered, "I thought your companions were no such great wizards as you made them out to be. Trouble yourself no more about them; they will not slay you just yet; but let us spend Christmas-day in mirth and joy." So they spent Christmas-day in such revel as befitted the time and a late escape from death, and laughed and sang, till the rafters had not heard the like of it for many a long year.

Now, as New Year's-day drew nigh, the man fell again into his old sadness, and became so gloomy that the girl noticed his strange manner, and asked him what ailed him.

He answered, "The wizards on the Westmann Islands are now preparing another Sending, and when that shall come here, it will be no easy task for me to escape from it."

"Oh," said the girl, "just wait till I have tried its strength, and then it will be time enough to be afraid of it. Meanwhile don't trouble your head about either your friends on the island or their threats."

And since the maiden was so light-hearted, he thought that surely he would be but a coward to be dull and sad, and accordingly put the brightest face he could upon the matter.

On New Year's-eve he spoke to the girl, and said, "Now the Sending has been put ashore; and, gifted as it is with all the wrath of the wizards, it comes apace."

She begged him to come with her, and led him across the country till they came to a place where the grass was high and the shrubs were thick. In the midst of this, the girl stooped down, and removing a low mound of earth and grass which stood at her feet, came to a large slab of stone, which she lifted, and, by so doing, disclosed a passage, leading far below ground. They entered the passage, and after walking for a long time in darkness, greater than that of the blackest night, they came to a cavern, which

"Near this light, in a mean and wretched bed, lay an old man of the most horrible aspect."

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was dimly lighted with some fat, burning in a human skull. Near this light, in a mean and wretched bed, lay an old man of the most horrible aspect. His eyes were as red as blood, and his mouth reached from ear to ear; and as for his nose, no words can tell its length and colour. So frightful was he, that the wizard quaked at the very idea of going near him.

"Oho!" said this old fellow, "strange news you have to tell me, no doubt, foster-daughter. It is long enough since I saw you last. What can I do for you?"

The girl told him all about the wizard, and his friends in the Westmann Islands, and how they had despatched a Sending to slay him, and in what way she had treated the same. Upon which the old man waxed quite lively, and asked to see the marrow-bone. So she immediately took it out of her pocket and gave it him.

As soon as he saw it, he waxed even livelier than before, and became at last so very brisk, that he was really quite another man. Taking the bone in his hand, with every appearance of pleasure, he turned it about and patted it, and rubbed it all over.

While he was mumbling over the bone, the girl noticed the islander growing sleepier and sleepier, and, at length, said to the old man, "If you will aid me at all, aid me now, for I know full well that the Sending is near at hand."

Without more ado, therefore, the old fellow took the

cork out of the bone, and out crept the fly, whom he patted and stroked, and to whom he said, "Go now. Receive all the Sendings from the wizards on the Westmann Islands, and swallow them."

Immediately, with a loud roar like thunder, the fly flew from the cavern; and when it came to the upper world, behold! it became so large, that one jaw reached up to the heavens, and the other touched the earth; and when not only one Sending, but two or three came, it swallowed them all down; and so the islander was saved from the malice of his companions.

After thanking the old man for his timely help, the girl and the Westmann islander returned to the farm, where, as the story goes, they became man and wife; lived to a good old age, and increased and multiplied. Thus was the land repeopled. As for the other wizards, mighty little more was ever heard about them; just enough, indeed, to amount to nothing.

Priest Hálfdán and Olöf of Lónkot.

A certain old woman, named Ólöf, lived at a farm called Lónkot, in the parish of Fell, of which Hálfdán was the priest. She was very wise, and very well skilled in magic, but by no means amiable, and rather given to quarrelling. She and Hálfdán never got on well together, and many

were the high words that passed between them, whenever they met.

One day in the autumn, the priest, and some of his servants, were out fishing, and had had the luck to catch a large halibut. As, however, the weather was sharp and frosty, the rowers paid little enough heed to the fish, but blew ruefully on their chilled fingers, and grumbled at the cold. Seeing this, Hálfdán said to them, "What would you give me, my lads, if I caught a good large hot sausage for you now?" They shook their heads, and said that he could not do so, skilful as he was, and looked more wretched than before. But the priest threw out a line over the edge of the boat, and in an instant dragged up on the end of it a large sausage, so hot that it bubbled and sputtered again. The rowers could hardly believe their eyes, but spent a mighty short time in wondering, finding that the best way to test the reality of the sausage was to eat it; which they forthwith did. But when they had finished their meal, lo! the halibut was no more to be seen.

"Aha!" said the priest, "something the old woman must have for her hot sausage."

The truth was that Hálfdán had enchanted the sausage from Dame Ólöf; but she (like many other good folk we could mention) was not disposed to give a thing away when she could sell it at a price, so she paid herself by enchanting the halibut from Hálfdán.

Priest Hálfdán and the Devil.

One winter, when it was rather late in the season, it chanced that Priest Hálfdán was in great need of dried fish for household use, his home stock having quite run out. He sent in all directions to his neighbours' houses, offering to buy from them what fish they could spare, but they were in just the same plight as himself, for the season had been bad everywhere, and the people suffered much from it.

As was the custom in those times, the priest kept a large number of fishing-boats at Grímsey, where there was also lying a vast quantity of fish, stacked for the winter. But so stormy was the weather at this time, and so dangerous the sea, that all hope in this quarter was quite cut off.

But Hálfdán, who saw no pleasure in starving when there was fish to be had somewhere, called in the devil, and said to him, "If you will go to Grímsey, and bring me thence dried fish enough for the rest of the winter, without wetting them, you shall have my soul. If, however, I find one drop of water upon the fish, you shall lose your bargain."

The devil was not a little pleased at this, and snatched at the offer hastily enough, making, however, the condition that the priest should provide him with the craft.

"Oh yes," said Hálfdán, "what easier?" and forthwith gave him an old kitchen coal-scuttle. But bad as this ship was, the devil was bound to make the best of it, so addressed himself to his journey late in the afternoon.

Next morning the priest's wife went out to see how went the weather, and the priest called out after her, saying, "How looks the sky?"

"Fair enough," said she; "but there is a dark cloud in the north which covers rapidly the heavens."

"Aha," replied her husband, who was still in bed, "it is time to get up then; the devil has done his work right speedily."

Upon which he got up, and dressing himself in haste, left the house. The devil was now quite close to the shore, but when he saw Hálfdán he lost his courage, and started in his seat, so that the surf broke over the coal-scuttle, and wet the tails of all the fish. As soon as he had landed, he delivered the great bundle of fish to the priest, who was not long in finding the water upon their tails, and who at once declared himself to have got the best of the bargain.

To this the devil had nothing to say, and was thinking of looking very crestfallen, when—so says the story—the priest cut off the wet tails of the fish, and flinging them into Old Nick's face, cried, "There! There is freight-payment for you."

Ever since that, the thinnest part of a fish's tail has been called "the devil's flap."

Priest Eiríkur's Handbook.

Now you shall hear several strange stories about Priest Eiríkur of Vossósar, who seems to have been as wonderful a person as Sœmundur the learned himself.

The fame of his learning, and his wisdom, more particularly in the Black Art, was so widely spread abroad, that many young men used to come to him, and ask him to teach them, even from quite distant parts of the country. But he used to put those who came to him to some sort of trial, and if he found them worthy of his pains, well and good, he taught them as much as they could learn; but if they failed to please him, he sent them off about their business.

Among others once came to him a lad, who craved his instructions in magic.

"Stay with me over next Sunday," said Eiríkur to him, "and come with me that day to Krysivík; and after that I will tell you my mind."

Accordingly on Sunday morning they rode from home together, but when they came to a tract of country, called Sandur, Eiríkur said, "Oh! I have forgotten my handbook. It is under my pillow. Go therefore and fetch it for me, but beware not to open it."

The lad returned for the book, and rode back with it, longing, but not daring, to look into it. When he arrived however at Sandur, his curiosity got the better of his wisdom, so he opened the book and looked into it. But suddenly he found himself surrounded by a countless host of devils, who cried, "What shall we do? What shall we do?"

"Do?" answered he quickly, "why, plait cables out of the sand."

Upon which they all sat down, and fell to their task.

But the lad rode on till he caught up Priest Eirík̇ur, who was, by now, far in advance, and gave the book to him.

"You have opened it," said the priest.

"No," said the lad, "not I."

When they were on their way home again, and came to Sandur, there were all the devils hard at work, though, to be sure, they had not yet made a single rope between them. As soon as the priest saw them, he said, "I knew well enough, my good lad, that you had opened the book, in spite of your denial; but you have acted with such presence of mind, that I see plainly it will be well worth my while to teach you."

So from that time forth the lad became Eirík̇ur's pupil.

The story does not say a word more about the devils who tried to plait cables out of the sand at Sandur, but there can be no doubt whatever that, after a while, they

must have given up the task as a fruitless one. For they are assuredly not at work there now.

Eiríkur and the Beggar-woman.

One day two men came to Eiríkur at Vossósar, and begged him to teach them the magic art. He looked very much amazed at the idea, and said that as he knew nothing of magic, he could teach them nothing; "but," continued he, "you have come far, and are weary; spend therefore the night at my house, and be welcome." They agreed willingly to this, and after a good supper rested that night at the priest's house.

Next morning betimes, Eiríkur asked them to ride with him round the farm, and see his fields and stock. They had ridden but a very little distance from the house, when an old woman met them who had a child at her breast, and walking up to Eiríkur, begged him in piteous tones and with many tears to help her in her need. But Eiríkur became wroth, and roughly telling her that he should do nothing of the sort, made as if to ride quickly past her. She however caught hold of his bridle, and entreated him again, in the name of Heaven, to help her, as she was a widow, and had neither home, nor food, nor money. At this Eiríkur waxed still more wroth, and cried, "I am weary to death of this eternal whining; a good thing it

would be, I think, if some one were to kill all you beggars, troublesome wretches that you are!" Still the old woman wept and clung to his bridle.

Then Eiríkur, turning to the two men, said, "You must kill this old hag for me, if you wish me to teach you any of my magic."

One of them answered him, "Never thought I, Eiríkur, that you were so godless a man. No such crime as this will I commit, whatever price I get for it."

"I see no particular harm in it," said the other stranger, "and if Priest Eiríkur will it, I will slay this old witch with pleasure. Surely it is a good thing to rid the land of the like; and they ought to be themselves thankful to be so soon quit of their wretched lives." With which words he would have ridden at the beggar, but lo! she was no longer with them.

"Aha!" said Eiríkur, "*you* may go your way, my friend; never will I teach such a heartless, impious fellow."

But the stranger, who had first spoken, he took to himself as his pupil.

The raising up of this old woman by jugglery was one of the many ways in which Eiríkur was wont to prove those who came to him to learn magic.

Eiríkur's Saturday Afternoon.

Eiríkur was wont every Saturday afternoon to disappear from his farm, without anybody's knowing whither he went.

Once a youth, who was learning under him, moved by curiosity, begged leave to go with him, on one of those occasions, but met, for a long time, with an utter refusal.

"You will gain no good by it," said Eiríkur; "you will do better to remain at home."

However, as the youth only became more urgent in his entreaties, the priest at last yielded to them.

Some weeks passed, and one Saturday the priest bade the youth follow him. They walked together till they came to a hill which stood in the farm inclosure, or tún. Eiríkur knocked with his staff upon the mound, which at once opened of itself, and out came an aged lady, who greeted Eiríkur in a friendly manner, begging him to enter. There came out, too, a maiden, who took the young man by the hand, and bade him also come in. So they went in, and came to the family-room, all round of which a number of people were sitting. Eiríkur and the youth took their seats by the door, the latter being next to it. Nobody spoke a single word, a thing which the young man found strange enough; but great indeed was his wonder when the two ladies left the room, and after a

while returned with a huge trough and a knife, and, going up to the first man on the other side of the door, took him, threw him down, cut his throat with the knife, and let his blood run into the trough. Then they took the next one, and treated him in the same way, and thus the third, and the fourth, and the fifth, and so on, always in order. But the strangest part of the whole business was that nobody made the slightest resistance, or betrayed the least fear, nor did anybody speak. Then the youth looked at Eiríkur to see what he thought about it, but Eiríkur was quite unmoved. Still the ladies went on slaughtering each man in his turn, amid a silence only broken by the bubbling of the blood, till they came to Eiríkur, whom they took, flung down, and slew in the same manner.

By this time the youth had seen a great deal more than enough, and starting up with a loud cry took to his heels, and never ceased running till he came to the farm. When he arrived there, pale and breathless, and with his knees knocking together with fear, whom should he see leaning against the door-post but Priest Eiríkur himself.

"What are you running so fast for, my man?" said he. "Are you in a hurry?"

At this the other looked sheepish enough and did not know what to say, for he at once saw that he had been duped by one of the priest's juggling tricks.

"Ah," continued Eiríkur, "I always thought, my good

fellow, that you had not the courage to see anything out of the common, and now I am sure about it."

The Horse-stealers.

Priest Eiríkur always warned all the herdsmen and other lads in the neighbourhood of Vossósar against taking his riding-horses without his leave, as horse-stealing was very common in those parts, assuring them that if they disobeyed him it would be at their peril. This put an end to the thefts for a long while, for the herdsmen held Eiríkur in great awe, and knew full well that he meant what he said.

Two boys, however, thinking they could have a capital ride without its ever coming to the priest's ears, mounted two of Eiríkur's horses, which were grazing far from the farm. But they were no sooner seated than off ran the horses at a mad pace towards Vossósar, without their being in any way able either to guide or check them. As soon as they saw that the horses were not to be managed, the lads tried to throw themselves off on to the ground, but lo! that was not to be done, for their trousers had grown to the horses' backs.

"This won't do," said one of the lads; "we must get off somehow, or the horses will take us to Priest Eiríkur himself, and I don't at all care to fall into *his* hands."

" They were no sooner seated than off ran the horses at a mad pace towards Vojsósar."

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With these words he took a knife from his pocket, and cutting that part of his clothes which had grown to the horse's back, thus freed himself and leaped on to the ground.

But the other, either because he was not sharp enough or because he did not wish to spoil his trousers, stuck where he was, shouting for help. So the horses galloped home to Vossósar, the one with the screaming lad on its back, the other with the patch of trousers.

The priest was outside the door when the horses came running home, and stopping them he took the patch of cloth from the back of the one, and said to the boy who sat looking very helpless and miserable on the back of the other, "Well! you find stealing the horses of Priest Eiríkur of Vossósar great fun, no doubt. Get off, now, and take my advice, never touch my horses again, or it will be the worse for you. As for the other lad, he had more spirit than you, and deserves to be taught a little, for he promises to turn out a hopeful fellow."

Soon after, it happened that the boy came to the priest, who showed him the piece of cloth, and asked him whether he knew it.

Without betraying the least fear, the lad told him all about the matter.

Eiríkur, as much pleased with his openness as with his presence of mind, smiled, and bade him come henceforth and live with him, an offer which he gratefully accepted.

So the youth dwelt long with Priest Eiríkur, and was very faithful to him, and learned of him—so people say—more than most folk know of the ancient art of magic.

Eiríkur and the Farmer.

In Eiríkur's parish of Vossósar, there lived a certain farmer who never went to church, and, having a grudge against the priest, used, on purpose to annoy him, to go out fishing on the Sunday, whenever the weather was favourable.

One Sunday, Eiríkur was going to church to perform service, and passed on his way the house of the farmer, who, guessing when the priest would go by, just managed to be putting on his skin leggings at the moment. Seeing this, Eiríkur addressed him with courteous words, and asked him if he would not, for once, go to church that day.

The farmer rudely said "No," and continued putting on his skin trousers, without paying any further heed to the priest, who left him and went on to the church.

When service was over, Eiríkur returned home the same way as he had come, and passing the farmer's house, saw him through the open door, sitting with one leg of his skin trousers on, and the other off.

"Ah, my friend," said the priest to him, "I dare say you

have had a good draught to-day, since you are back so soon?"

But the farmer, looking very crestfallen, was obliged to own that he had not moved from the spot since the priest had seen him last, and begged him to free him, as he could neither lift hand nor foot.

Eiríkur answered, "If you find the devil strong enough to hold you now, what think you will he be able to do with you by and by?" and with these words freed him from the seat, to which, by his magic arts, he had bidden the devil bind him.

Ever after this the man went to church on Sundays, and became one of the best men in the parish.

Eiríkur and the Bishop.

The Bishop of Skálholt heard from time to time such stories of the witchcraft and strange doings of Eiríkur, that at last he thought it high time to strip that priest of his gown. So one winter, he sent eighteen of the pupils from the school, bidding them, in his name, publicly to strip Eiríkur of his robes and deprive him of his office. They started on their journey one fine day, not a little proud of their errand,—for it showed how much trust the bishop put in them; and as they rode along, talked very big about

the same, and would do mighty things when it came to the point.

One morning, Priest Eiríkur got up very early and went out of the house. After a while he came back, groaning heavily as if in pain or sorrow, and bade his people not on any account to let the beasts go out to pasture that day, as, said he, he thought he saw some signs of foul weather. Shortly after, there came on so fearful a storm, and so deep a fall of snow, that the people who wished to cross from one part of the farm-buildings to another, could scarcely stand out of doors for the wind and heavy drift. A little after noon, somebody knocked at the door, and the priest, on opening it, found that it was one of the youths sent by the bishop; so he asked him in. After a while, came another, then another, and then a fourth, till by evening every one of the eighteen had come. They had lost their way in the snow-drift, and been separated from one another, and thus it was that instead of coming to Vossósar in a body they came singly. Eiríkur treated them with the greatest hospitality, gave them changes of clothes, stabled their horses, and had withal so winning a manner, that his guests became too fond of him to be able to carry out the bishop's orders, to strip him of his gown. Accordingly, next morning they started from Vossósar with the kind farewells of Eiríkur, and in course of time came to Skálholt.

When the bishop heard how their journey had ended,

and that they had done nothing whatever, he was filled with displeasure, and vowed that he would go to Vossósar himself, and see how Eiríkur would get off then.

Now the winter passed away, and when the summer was at its full, the bishop left Skálholt with a numerous band, and when he arrived at Vossósar pitched his tents outside the wall of the tún. This being on a week-day, the bishop determined to wait till the Sunday, and then to strip the priest of his gown. He warned his men earnestly to receive nothing from the hands of Eiríkur, and having given them this order, took his way to the house and called the priest before him.

Eiríkur received the bishop cordially, and was so very merry and so perfectly at his ease, that his reverence did not know how to begin. So he asked to see the church. Eiríkur therefore took him to it, and the bishop could not help being pleased with the good order everything there was in.

But while the latter was in the church, one of his servants passed by in order to get fire from the farm, and Eiríkur, who was in the porch, called the man to him, and having greeted him in the sweetest and most friendly way, pulled a bottle of wine from his pocket and begged him to taste it.

"No," said the man, "I dare not, it would be against the bishop's strictest orders."

But the more he refused the more Eiríkur pressed him,

till at last the man, overcome by his entreaties, put his mouth to the bottle and took a draught. And it was not such a very short draught either, for he thought that in all his days he had never tasted such good wine. When he had drunk he begged Eiríkur to give him the bottle, that he might refresh the bishop with it anon. Secretly laughing at the success of his trick, Eiríkur willingly gave him the rest of the wine, and off went the man with the bottle in his pocket.

Then the bishop came out of the church and returned to his tent, while Eiríkur went home and waited to see how things would turn out.

At dinner, the servant-man poured the wine into the bishop's glass, who had no sooner tasted it than he quite changed his mind about Eiríkur, and after dinner went to the priest's house, and stayed a week there in the greatest mirth and good-fellowship. At the end of that time he returned to Skálholt with all his company.

This was the way in which Eiríkur duped the bishop and kept his gown on his back.

Eiríkur and the Convict.

North-west of Vossósar, in the great lava plain, there is a cavern called Gapi, which is often used as a shelter and resting-place by travellers passing that way.

In this cavern Eiríkur hid a convict (this history saith not why) for a whole summer, and so enchanted the place, that neither could anybody find the cave itself, nor the cairn of stones which had been raised on a neighbouring hill to mark it.

The convict was from one of the eastern districts, namely, Sída, and having murdered another, had been condemned to lose his head.

The whole summer the man remained there, while papers were sent all over the country describing him and offering a reward to any who should catch him. Priest Eiríkur having got one of these bills, sent the convict himself with it to Sída, having first so transformed him by magic art that nobody could know him, and bade him say that the murderer had been caught in the district of Selvogur, and was now sitting, loaded with fetters, in the church at Strand.

Upon hearing this, the people of Sída at once set off southwards, and, coming to the church at Strand, found there sitting, loaded with chains, the man whom they sought. So they seized him and took him to the east, and made preparations for cutting off his head, according to the sentence which had been passed upon him. But when it came to the point, the axe would not cut, and bent at every stroke upon the man's neck. Accordingly the good folk of Sída were obliged to give up the attempt, and agreed to take him on board a ship bound for Denmark, in

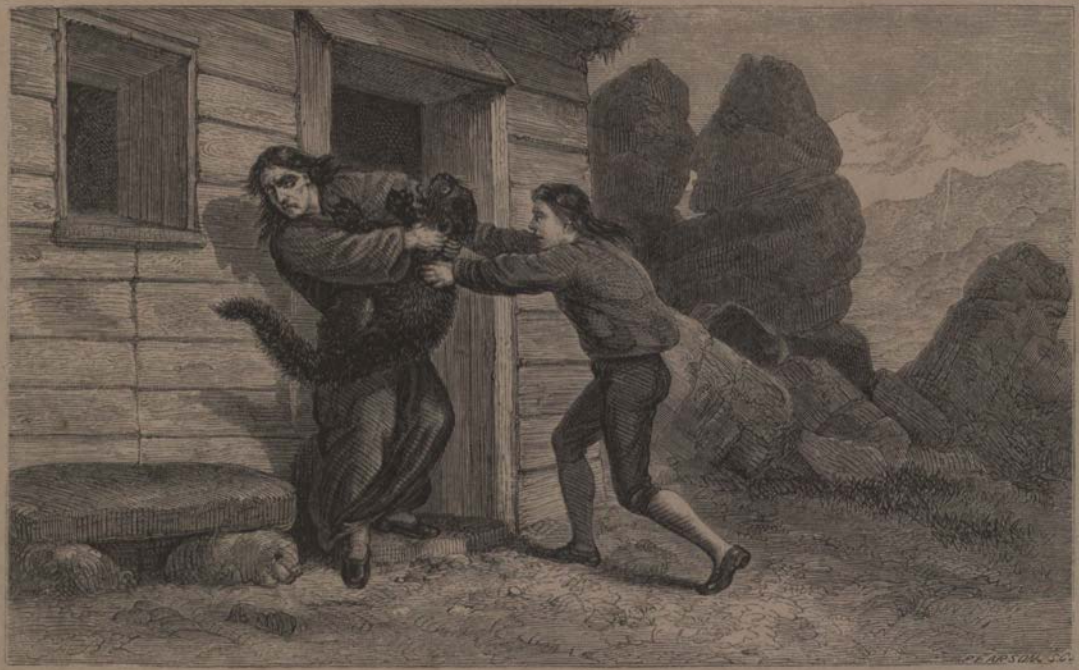
which country they hoped the axes would be a little sharper. But no sooner had they taken him on board the ship, than his human form vanished, and they found that they had put themselves to all this pain and trouble for a block of stone with two arms! The sailors, as soon as they saw this, made great game of the people of Síða, and rated them right soundly for their blindness, so that the good folk made all haste to shore covered with shame; not, however, before they had seen their convict hurled overboard.

Now they began to see that they had been made fools of by Eiríkur, and, bursting with rage, they determined to revenge themselves upon him for all the trouble they had been put to, and for the silly figures they had cut in the eyes of the Danish sailors.

To carry out their vengeance they bribed a man from the West firths who dabbled in magic to send a great cat to slay Eiríkur.

When Puss arrived at Vossósar, Eiríkur was outside his door in company with the young man who had formerly opened his handbook and bidden the devils weave ropes from sand.

The cat ran up with great strides and flaming eyes, and sprang at the priest's neck, intending to fix herself there and kill him; but Eiríkur was too quick for her, and, as the youth aided him with a right good will, Puss got the worst of the battle, and before very long lay dead upon the ground.



"The cat ran up with great strides and flaming eyes, and sprang at the priest's neck."

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Now the story goes on to say that Eirík̇ur forthwith despatched a Sending to the man in the West firths, and put an end to him almost as quickly as to his goblin cat.

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